Search for Tradition in Modern Art

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Introduction

Nowadays, many people are perplexed with contemporary art. Some claim that contemporary works cannot be considered as art, for they are ridiculous. These people also assert that all self-acclaimed art lovers – who come to defence of all new innovations in the field of visual art – are only pretentious dilettantes. To substantiate this statement, they quote the accident of a teenager who left pair of glasses on the floor San Francisco's Museum of Modern Art and then waited for visitors' response.[1] And it turned out that these glasses did indeed get plenty of attention – gallery attendants mistaken the glasses for part of installation and acclaimed them as a work of 'great art.' On the other hand, other cases were recorded in which the reverse accidents ensued – to be exact, 'great artworks' were unintentionally destroyed for they were perceived as common objects. For example, very recently a German pensioner visiting Nuremberg's Neues Museum filled up what she believed was a crossword puzzle. In fact, it was a work of visual art titled 'Reading-work-piece' (1965) – created by avant-garde artist Arthur Koepcke.[2] There are other cases reported in which cleaning staff of a particular gallery cleaned up and threw out art installations for they identified them as rubbish: an installation from the production of Goldschmied and Chiari was disposed at Museion Bozen-Bolzano[3]; a piece of Gustav Metzger's work was also binned at Tate Britain[4]; and even Damien Hirst's artwork was mistaken for garbage and got rid of at Eyestorm gallery.[5] All these cases prompted prevalent critique from public and discussions on whether contemporary art should be merited as highly as 'traditional art.'

However, it is rather difficult to define what 'traditional art' is in universal terms. It seems that, in the popular public consensus, this term refers to a figurative painting or sculpture that predates nineteenth century and encompasses subject matter which was popular in its given historical era. It can be distinguished from the 'contemporary art' for since the end of the nineteenth century different criteria has started to be applied in order to designate an 'art object'– for example, an 'art object' does not have to be a painting or a sculpture, rather it can be anything at all – even such a mundane object as a pair of glasses; the creator does not have to create the object manually – the conceptual creations are likewise considered to be

[1] Hunt, 2016
[2] BBC News, 2016
[3] BBC News, 2016
[4] BBC News, 2004
[5] Blackstock, 2001

valid ‘art objects;’ and there is not an unified societal pressure on putting any particular subject matter into focus. One can then perceive the rationale behind the categorisation of the ‘traditional’ and ‘non-traditional’ art. The ‘traditional art’ was following certain practices and processes for centuries – such as an act of drawing or of carving – and these were handed down from one generation to another as the means of capturing reality. In the nineteenth century, one can note a certain discontinuity, when – figuratively speaking – an apprentice refused to accept the teaching of his master and then apply his master’s guidelines in his own creation. Certainly, previous centuries have known countless examples of art innovators – but they have never had enough influence to affect the conventional establishment. Only after the nineteenth century was the loss of tradition embraced by the majority of the artistic world and therefore this phenomenon was acknowledged as the constituent of a modernity.

In fact, according to Nachoem Wijnberg and Gerda Gemser, public criticism of a work of art is a relatively recent phenomenon – and its initiation can be estimated in the time when art diverged from the standards of the aforementioned idea of ‘traditional art.’ Wijnberg and Gemser examined the models of systems of artistic evaluation in the Western art and concluded that some decisive criteria were adjusted only in the relatively recent past. They stated that, formerly, if ‘the Academy approved of the work of an artist, especially if the artist was admitted to its ranks, the artist was able to earn rewards for his or her artistic excellence.’[6] According to their findings, in the past, art trade was monopolised organisation governed by a selected few professionals who decided who deserved to perform the trade of an artist. However, this scheme changed when the Impressionists introduced their paintings to the public. They revolutionised painting technique with their partial withdrawal from the mimetic representation and perfection of detail – which was a practice previously unthinkable in the case of professional painters – in favour of phenomenologically subordinated perception. For this reason, their art was classified as ‘modern.’ However, this innovation did not gain any praise from the art professionals at first – Impressionists were not even allowed to exhibit their artworks at the prestige Salons.[7] But they did obtain support from private collectors and commercial galleries – and as the sales of their artworks rose, their prestige increased as well; and eventually the public demand acquired their works with ‘museum-like qualities’[8] which lead towards success in the community circles of professional artists as well. Subsequently, it is possible to mark late nineteenth century as the time when the public

[6] 2000: 325
[7] Ibid, 326
[8] Ibid

influenced the opinion of professionals in the question of evaluation of art. I believe this was a crucial moment in the history of art, for the impact that public attained on the art market is still perceivable today. It was wealthy collectors who assigned the price to the works of Impressionists in the past, and by large degree it is also wealthy collectors at the present time who assign the price – and therefore relevance – to works such as those of Koepcke, Goldschmied and Chiari, Metzger and Hirst. That is why I believe it is essential to inspect Modern Art – because it is the innovations of Modern Art that shaped contemporary Western art into the form it exists in today. To be more precise, as I have illustrated with the study of Impressionists – firstly, Modern Art permitted greater freedom in the means of artistic expression for it defined innovation as a positive and desirable quality; secondly, it included the opinion of the public into the process of decision-making in art industry.

In my Thesis I will examine different French artists (and a few Italian ones whom I have taken into consideration on account of their strong links to the French culture) who were categorised as 'modern' artists. I am aware that I am using the term 'artists' rather broadly in my account – to be specific, in my Thesis, I have analysed works of writers/ poets and of visual artists (painters, urban space transformers, décollagists, ...). Certainly, it is crucial to make a distinction in the two disciplines of literature and visual arts – as W.J.T. Mitchell noted, 'Language works with arbitrary, conventional signs, images with natural, universal signs. Language unfolds in temporal succession; images reside in a realm of timeless spatiality and simultaneity.'[9] However, all the artists that I have studied had one thing in common – they captured the perspective of a modern man in their art, regardless of the media they utilised for it. Furthermore, the artistic techniques they used – different as they might be – were all innovative in an effort to correspond with the contemporary modern times; yet, I would argue, these artistic techniques nonetheless remained in connection with a tradition. One can therefore discern parallels in the determination of being part of present times while maintaining strong ties with the past in the works of all of these artists – and even though they created different art forms in different times, they used methodology that is somehow harmonious – and for this reason I perceive them to be, using Benjamin's metaphor, different parts of a single constellation.

I have decided to focus on French artists for the reason that Paris acted as cultural capital of the Western world in the nineteenth and early twentieth century. It acquired this status as it introduced some of the most influential art movements, such as Impressionism,

[9] 1984: 3

Surrealism and Cubism; it was also an important site for Dadaism (even though it was established in Switzerland). Hence, it was discerned that 'Paris in the early 20th century [acted] as 'the capital of light' for cultural activity that attracted not only artists but also intellectuals throughout the world.'[10] Nevertheless, Richard Etulian noted that after World War II, 'in the decades following the peace, New York City emerged to replace Paris as the art capital of the world.'[11] This shift of attention was caused on account of destructive warfare that took place primarily on the European continent – as a result, Paris was destroyed and it required material and political reconstruction. Many influential artists also immigrated to the United States in an endeavour to escape the conflict. In those difficult post-war years, the United States was a keen supporter of the reconstruction of Western Europe – they provided it with financial aid in the form of the Marshall Plan. Albeit, there was another article which was imported by means of the United States' influence over Western Europe – that is, Americanised culture in the form of capitalist regime and mass consumerism. For example, as Kirstin Ross noted, 'cinematography was used as a propaganda for the American way of life.'[12] For this reason, in the last two chapters of my thesis I will also examine the scope of influence American system had on France – to be precise, I will note French adjustments and submission into – but also critical responses to – commodity culture.

Furthermore, for the concerns of my argument, I have chosen a definition of 'modernity' that is rather flexible. Within my chapters, I have employed the perception of modernity connoting the alternation in economic and social conditions. In other words, I regarded it as a certain discontinuation from the previous relationships manifested in everyday life. Throughout the chapters, I identified two manifestations of this kind of modernity: the first was 'material' in its essence. By which I mean elements of changing arrangement of urban architecture and the overall transformation of metropolitan character – for example, the means of transportation. Into this 'material' group I also included recent technological inventions, such as photography. Secondly, I will look at the 'immaterial' side of modern developments. These usually include the effect of 'material' innovation as demonstrated in everyday relationships. For example, both means of transportation and photography were critical to the understanding of the instigation and progress of novel forms of art for they employed completely new patterns of perceptiveness. I will also examine the question of mass

[10] Hellmanzik, 2010: 200
[11] 1996: 183
[12] 1996: 38

consumption and the ways in which it influenced the art market and likewise the audience of artworks.

For this reason, I will start my investigation in Chapter One with Charles Baudelaire. I will study the conditions of post-industrial society of late nineteenth century France. Its transition into industrial power was immense – for 'France remained the largest industrial nation in the world until 1820, at least in terms of gross output.'[13] As a result, many factories were built and many workers employed. The economic growth initiated the origins of capitalist regime in France – Rosalind Williams noted that the first department store called The Bon Marché opened in Paris in 1852[14] which provided workers with an outlet for spending of their wages. Paris city enlarged due to the massive levels of immigration coming from mostly rural areas – Maurice Lévy-Leboyer documented 'a surplus rural population: unable to make a living from agriculture, its members had had to follow the pattern of demographic trends, and they periodically moved to the towns, either to seek supplementary income on a temporary basis, or to escape starvation.'[15] Authorities decided that administrative measures were thus necessary – however, Walter Benjamin argued that their primal objective was in fact the governance of Parisian citizens. He also wrote a study of architectural developments and the way these changed Parisians' perception and their experience of the everyday. He correlated modernity to the process of loss of traditions, which is a concept I will examine throughout my thesis. Furthermore, the model of mass consumption was also visibly determined in the art market. As one example, Benjamin observed that the most-read literary genre of the times was feuilleton. Newspaper subscription also rose drastically – on account of the popularization of the serial novel, which were likewise disreputable due to their poor quality.[16] As a result of the accessibility of these, 'Jürgen Habermas cast the rise of the commercial mass press of the late nineteenth century as the decline of the public sphere, where a "culture-debating public" gave way to a "culture-consuming public."'[17] However, what makes Baudelaire distinctive is that he was actually aware of the pressure of public and he even implemented his opinion of it into his poems. Therefore, his poems provided me with an account of personal experience of an artist who struggled to find an appropriate expression for his art within his time.

[13]Horn, 2006: 3
[14]1982: 66
[15]1978: 245
[16]1973: 35
[17]Shaya, 2004: 42

For Chapter Two, I will explore the art of the Futurists and Giorgio de Chirico. I will discuss the relevance of Benjamin's notion of loss of tradition within their art. Futurists were notorious for their ambition of complete detachment from traditional art practice. I will investigate up to what extent it would be possible to claim that they succeeded in this goal. I will also analyse the way in which they captured the experience of modernity – while comparing it to Benjamin's account. Consideration will be likewise given to Futurists' recognition by the mass public and also professional audience – and I will investigate Futurists' awareness and self-perception of this reception as well. I will compare their ideology and methodology against that of de Chirico. He was the Futurists' contemporary and open critic – he explained their commercial success by the fact that their contemporary art audience was full of dilettantes. In terms of de Chirico's artworks, I will focus exclusively on his 'Metaphysical paintings' (1911-1919) which were produced during the time he lived in Paris. However, I will also examine his critical writings and selected essays in which he advocated a return to the traditional approach towards High Art. I will record his proposition of transforming the standards of the High Art into his present times.

In my Chapter Three, I will return to France in its post-war period. I found this period extremely interesting for the reason that certain parallels can be withdrawn between 1960s and the late nineteenth century of Baudelaire's Paris. That is the reason for my decision of constructing such a vast historical leap between Chapter Two and Chapter Three. I would argue that there was linear and gradual modern development since the French Industrial Revolution up to the First World War. First World War represented the unconceivable destruction and following decline in all aspects of everyday life – as Dominique Borne and Henri Dubief noted on the interwar period, 'système capitaliste mondial édifié dans les années 1920, la France est victime et des déséquilibres de ce système et des propres disparités de son développement économique.'[18] By little bit more than two decades the Second World War followed. Afterwards, the course of modern development resumed – similarly to the end of nineteenth century, new factories were opened, urban migration surged and the country's economy started to grow strongly once again. Owing to extensive Second World War destruction, the complete reconstruction of Paris (comparable to the one that was executed by Haussmann in Baudelaire's times) was necessary once again – although it was a rather slow process, reconstruction of the city 'was gradually being accomplished. In addition, the state initiated a second phase of reconstruction in 1955, with the number of completions in the

[18] 22: 1989

twelve months after December 1956 more than doubling from 1503 to 3595 apartments, and continuing to rise to 4772 in December 1958.'[19] Furthermore, the capitalist nature of society which was initially observed in the nineteenth century in limited extent became discernible as the primary organisation of daily life – Alexander Sedlmaier and Stephan Malinowski marked 'the commercialization of these wishes and the increasing acceptance of consumer society's cultural and behavioural patterns.'[20] Contemporary artists were similarly conscious about this transformation of everyday life – and they certainly registered their disapproval more forcefully than Baudelaire had done. I will briefly illustrate the report on these social conditions in Perec's novel *Les Choses: Une histoire des années soixante* (1965) and I will provide a more thoughtful examination of the projects from the Situationists International group. I will attempt to elucidate the reason for their rejection of art production within their contemporary period – but also the motives of two of their members who did not follow this proscription and persisted in their active art careers nonetheless. I will also explore other channels than art the Situationist International employed in order to express their disapproval with their contemporary situation.

Finally, in Chapter Four I will reconcile the viewpoint of active artists who were contemporary to the Situationists International and also agreed with their critique of the contemporary establishment of a society – namely, Gérard Fromanger, Raymond Hains and Jacques Villeglé. The two elements that I consider to be crucial to their creation on the account of their engagement with the development of the popular visual culture of their times – and thus I will analyse them with the greatest attention to detail – were these artists' particular choice of model for their pieces and also the medium they utilised for their production. In fact, these artists exploited symbols of consumer society – namely, the advertising industry – for their artistic expression. They utilised and openly criticised these symbols at the same time. I would also like to establish the extent to which the aforementioned artists' production can be perceived as that of the traditional artists' – or if that is possible at all – considering that Fromanger, Hains and Villeglé incorporated novel features into their art, such as photography (that is usually disassociated from the traditional artistic techniques on account of the recent date of this technique's discovery and also because the process of taking a photograph lacks specific elements of craftsmanship that are necessary for the production of a painting or a sculpture) or commercial posters. Needless to say, through this particular juxtaposition a conflict was created since the incentive for the creation

[19] Clout, 2004: 135
[20] 2011: 258

of the marketing executives is primarily perceived to be the financial gain (for, in simplified terms, marketing works towards raising the awareness of a specific product to boost its sales), whereas the ambition of Fromanger's, Hains' and Villeglé's works was the artistic enrichment of the public domain in which their 'contra-posters' were displayed.

To conclude, my objective is to examine the development of modern art and its correlation to socio-historical changes occurring in contemporary times of the studied artists. I will demonstrate the scope of artists' awareness of and responsiveness to these changes. However, I am principally interested in observing how these changes in themselves – and likewise artists' interaction with them – impacted means of artistic expression. I will also locate any correspondences in the developments of artists' representations over the time of the late nineteenth century to the second half of the twentieth century; and thus I will attempt to discover any notions of fluid succession in the process of innovation of modern art.

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Baudelaire and Benjamin: the Experience and Art in Modern Paris

Baudelaire was titled as 'The Writer of Modern Times' in Benjamin's collection of essays of the same name. This title is highly appropriate given that a characteristic feature of Baudelaire's literary works was the endeavour to capture the experience of modern times. The term 'modern times' connoted the era of the nineteenth century as characterised by socio-historical changes that transformed daily life. These changes were mainly prompted by industrialization. It was recorded that 'during the middle decades of the nineteenth century, France experienced rapid industrialization as growing numbers of workers and a growing percentage of the labor force became engaged in the production of manufactured goods.'[21] Many new factories were built and jobs created. The amount of job openings attracted great amount of workers-migrants, especially from the rural areas and countryside – as a result, 'cities were very crowded and hazardous.'[22] Leslie Moch agreed that 'population growth and industrial development would result in a much larger and urbanized labor force.'[23]

Accordingly, during the Second French Empire, the city of Paris underwent necessary – and fundamental – adjustments to its façades. Karen Truman noted that 'Baron Haussmann was hired by Napoleon III to reconstruct Paris between 1850 and 1860 […] He doubled the size of Paris, providing a new city better equipped for industry and transportation.'[24] It is apparent that the changes in urban surroundings of such capacity had a great impact on Paris' citizens. Parisians lost the sense of orientation in their own city and the radical changes caused damage to their feelings of belonging and self-identification as Parisians – for the city whose spaces they claimed were there no more.[25] I will examine Benjamin's works in some depth in order to engage with this topic – he wrote at length about the consequences, but also the motives for these spatial operations.

In addition, as Susan Buck-Morss commented, everyday life was 'artificial, a phantasmagoria of commodities and architectural construction made possible by the new industrial processes. The modern city was nothing but the proliferation of such objects, the density of which created an artificial landscape of buildings and consumer items as totally

[21] Aminzade, 1984: 439
[22] Kesztenbaum and Rosenthal, 2011: 207
[23] 2011: 21
[24] 2010: 3-4
[25] Benjamin, 1973: 174

encompassing as the earlier, natural one.'[26] It is apparent that these widespread changes of modern city also altered the perception of Parisians. The great capital was erected in front of them, offering them all the previously unknown experience (this was especially true for the immigrants from rural areas) – such as modern architectural buildings, fast modes of transportations and the excess of consumers objects which were made in the countless factories encircling the city. As Jeff Horn noted, 'French society and its structures changed dramatically as a result of industrial development.'[27] This then was the turbulent milieu of numerous and sudden changes in which Baudelaire wrote. He attempted to situate his poetry within his own historic era whilst he was actively addressing its modernity. His literary works were likewise greatly affected by his historical conditions – for the aforementioned shifts in citizens' perception also altered the patterns of literary market to which he was forced to subordinate his creation. For these reasons, Baudelaire's works could be recognised as the chronicles of his present times, but with one additional feature – namely, the records of contemporary sensibilities; and these proved to be essential for Benjamin's investigation of the past.

Firstly, Benjamin noted how the practices of social regulations were capable of triggering the individual's alienation. He claimed that 'since the French revolution an extensive network of controls had brought bourgeois life ever more tightly into its meshes. The numbering of houses in the big cities may be used to document this progressive standardization. Napoleon's administration had made it obligatory for Paris in 1805.'[28] This example shows how an individual was marked by an impersonal and objective number which labelled his space of residence. As Paris was of an immense size and its density of population was considerably high, authorities deemed it necessary to give it a logical structure in order to map the unperceivable masses: as early as 1728, 'the lieutenant général de la police ordered names placed on the first and last house of every street in Paris.'[29] However, this reformation was encountered with strong opposition from the city residents, who often tore off the metal plaques that were nailed to their households without their consent, until authorities resolved that the only way to maintain their diktat was to carve the street names and quartier numbers

[26] 1983: 213
[27] 2006: 3
[28] 1973: 47
[29] Ferguson, 1997: 22

directly into the walls of houses.[30] Nonetheless, even such an explicit interference of state into the matters of personal dwellings turned out to be of little or no avail as 'until the decree of 1805, only a few streets were numbered, and in a haphazard way. Parisians would navigate their way round the city by means of the shop and craftsmen's signs.'[31] Priscilla Ferguson argued that this 'vehement resistance to the decree revealed the still very weak sense of the city as a whole to which individuals subordinated their personal affairs.'[32] People who lived in Paris had not yet characterised this city to be a spatial assembly of a unified community; they did not perceive themselves to be sharing any kinship with the anonymous crowds; instead, they perceived themselves as individual families sheltered within their own houses. In other words, Parisians did not focus on the development of their city – rather they assigned significance to the advancement of their own family lineages. In accordance with this insight, Benjamin also remarked that even after Napoleon III's order, as late as in 1864, citizens refused the 'cold and official'[33] categorization and when they were questioned on their address they stated the name of their house as a substitute for their allocated number.

Benjamin formulated his concerns over organisations that tried to establish the analytical system whose outcome was the repression of individuals' agency. He defined this personal heritage of one's sense of family's belonging – that can be spatially projected into the residence of generations – as one of the defining factors of the self. According to him, this was threatened by the ruling classes' efforts to manipulate the past – as he specified it by declaring that 'not even the dead will be safe from the enemy, if he is victorious.'[34] However, the population's resistance can be recognised as a deterrent that held back the complete effectiveness of this attempt. The aforementioned citizens of 1864 were demonstrated to value the names of their houses, as these were unquestionably sourced from their ancestors who inhabited the rooms before them; consequently, these citizens valued tradition above the numerical place in the registry that lacked any personal substance. Jonathan Leader discussed that for Benjamin a matter of tradition 'is something passed on from one generation to the next, indeed from one individual to the next. It follows then that the other is crucial to its transmission.'[35]

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[30] Ibid
[31] Hicks, 2005
[32] 1997: 22
[33] 1973: 47
[34] Benjamin, 1999: 247
[35] 2010: 50

In addition, crucial implications that Benjamin assigned to naming are explicated in his essay 'On Language as Such and on the Language of Man' (1916) in which he revealed the establishment of the superiority of humans over nature due to their proficiency in language. This is achieved by man's ability to name things which surround them and which themselves are mute, and this quality is indisputable owing to its supernatural origin – Benjamin claimed that, as ascertained in the Bible, 'of all beings, man is the only one who names his own kind, as he is the only one whom God did not name.'[36] Names of people are accordingly idioms of particular originality for the reason that 'by giving names, parents dedicate their children to God; the names they give do not correspond - in a metaphysical rather than etymological sense - to any knowledge, for they name new-born children. In a strict sense, no name ought (in its etymological meaning) to correspond to any person, for the proper name is the word of God in human sounds.'[37] It is thus consistent with Benjamin's argument that houses titled by family names possessed an added value for they were no longer mute and external entities, but they were singled out as the places of foundation for heirs.

On the other hand, Benjamin claimed in his essay 'Experience and Poverty' (1933) that this status of social resistance towards the loss of traditions seemed to change in the 1920s. He pointed out to the paradigm of parents' decisions on naming their children according to transformed historical conditions resulting in altered social conventions – as shown in the fact that 'the Russians, too, like to give their children "dehumanized" names: they call them "October," after the month of the Revolution; "Pyatiletka," after the Five-Year Plan; or "Aviakhim," after an airline.'[38] This commentary on the replacement of the individual's originality (as it was enhanced in child's first name, according to Benjamin's argument that I have mentioned above) and his time-honoured sense of belonging (as it was suggested in child's last name, which was inherited from his ancestors) by personally unrelatable historical occurrence confirmed the distortion of the naming ritual. This crisis of the naming ritual also indicated the overall exertion of social experience, for the reason that language, in Benjamin's regard, disposes with the creative potential – Christopher Bracken proposed that Benjamin demanded 'a language that would change the world instead of describing it: the aim of such a language would not be to 'name' the experience of the past but, by uttering a 'word' that interrupts the progress of history, to actualize the present.'[39]

[36] 1997: 69
[37] Ibid
[38] 1999: 733
[39] 2002: 341

Thus, this phenomenon of naming likely enlightens the loss of traditional values which were given to family name – whether it served for a person or a house – for the reason that names of both of these subjects used to be related to personal history of the individuals, but in Benjamin's present time they were replaced by the emblems of state regime; meaning that private agency was adopted by public interests. Karyn Ball noted that 'rituals repeat and thereby *reactivate* in a phenomenological sense tradition as a force of continuity and community.'[40] However, this example illustrated that in less than fifty years of modernity people's conflict with the depersonalized labelling of their property was overpowered to such a great extent that they appeared indifferent when it came to naming their own child.

Furthermore, the imaginary of the house as an object with the conceptualised property of the past belongings is also audible in Baudelaire's essay that I am going to analyse. Although, initially, it is essential to enhance my assertions regarding the endeavour of establishing social control via the institution of houses' names – in fact, it was not solely the ontological properties of the houses that were transformed. On the contrary, in addition to the categorisation appliances there were also more concrete forces employed for this objective. Leading authorities not only sanctioned the destruction of the houses' walls via the forceful engravings of the address figures into them, they also tore whole walls down – to be more specific, the city of Paris was massively renovated under Napoleon III's regime, and the order was likewise of the primary importance in this directive.

First of all, it is necessary to mention Georges-Eugène Haussmann as he was the central figure who significantly transformed the facade of Paris in Baudelaire's milieu. He perceived the functional nature of the State as instrument of the rule of the bourgeois class.'[41] In order to achieve this function, it was crucial for him to 'think of the city (and even it suburbs) as a totality rather than as a chaos of particular projects.'[42] He is notorious for the enlargement of the boulevards, and this major transformation of the proportions altered the public life substantially: the colossal scale of the roads removed the danger of the traffic from pedestrians and, in consequence, it initiated the practice of unlimited strolling. As pronounced by Marshall Berman, 'Haussmann's sidewalks, like the boulevards themselves, were extravagantly wide, lined with benches, lush with trees. Pedestrian islands were installed to make crossing easier, to separate local from through traffic and to open up alternative routes

[40] 2015: 171

[41] Benjamin, 1973: 158
[42] Harvey, 2006: 13

for promenades.'[43] Conversely, another adjective of this expansion was also the supervision of civil obedience: the enormous size of these roads diminished the possibility of the construction of barricades, and Haussmann was publicly overt with his ambition to develop a plan of the city in which such constructions will not be viable. He aimed to inaugurate the model of a historically first of its kind milieu, in which the control of the leading figures would be absolute when projected into the archetype of a city that worked as a series of hegemony mechanisms – as Benjamin wrote, 'the breadth of the streets was to make the erection of barricades impossible, and new streets were to provide the shortest route between the barracks and the working-class areas.'[44]

This confrontation was not surprising, as barricades were the most popular form of defence in the recent uprising of 1848. Benjamin observed that 'the barricade was, indeed, at the centre of the conspirative movement'[45] adding that the workers 'preferred to die behind a barricade built of cobblestones from a Paris street.'[46] This statement manifests the affection that population felt for their home environments, and their aversion to an open battle exhibited the level of security they believed was sustained in their habitual spaces (although it is notable that, according to Benjamin, this impression of sanctuary in acquainted haven was false and solely illusionary. He believed that if the workers actually left their barricades to attain the open battle and the subsequent blockage of Thiers's path then that might have concluded in their victory.[47]) After the suppression of the revolution, the annihilation of the residence can be identified as being undertaken in two stages: firstly, the lives of workers were lost and so they were physically distanced from their domicile spaces; and secondly, due to Haussmann, the following restoration produced unfamiliar surroundings – as I am going to illustrate.

This gradual detachment was in line with Haussmann's goal: 'he needed to build a myth of a radical break around himself and the Emperor […] It created a founding myth and helped secure the idea that there was no alternative to the benevolent authoritarianism of Empire.'[48] This directive is analogous to Benjamin's theorisation of the power relationship that realized historical materialism – he declared that 'to articulate what is past does not mean to recognize "how it really was." It means to take control of a memory.'[49] As aforementioned,

[43] 1983: 151
[44] 2002: 12
[45] 1973: 15-16
[46] Ibid
[47] Ibid, 16
[48] Harvey, 2006: 10
[49] 1999: 247

he likewise suggested that it was current authorities that attained all the power over the past, in a sense, they owned it – that is, they were likely to manipulate the past's image in order to demonstrate their right to rule and/ or their right in making radical changes.

Accordingly, within the climate of modernization, Haussmann did not erect buildings whose aesthetics were drastically new and progressive; on the contrary, 'Haussmann's ideas were traditional, neoclassical.'[50] He was, in fact, preoccupied with the monuments and the ornamentations. Nonetheless, '126,000 new buildings, many along Haussmann's new streets and all in Second Empire style, were erected between 1879 and 1888'[51] which resulted into 'the destruction of the historical context of buildings and monuments.'[52] These abrupt changes led to the remoteness in the relationship between the citizens and their surroundings. The feeling of displacement was even enhanced as Paris citizens were able to recognise familiar structures in seemingly unknown localities, and that certainly generated eerie sensations as if from a dream. Benjamin commented that 'as far as Parisians were concerned, he alienated their city for them. They no longer felt at home in it. They began to become conscious of the inhuman character of the great city.'[53] Similarly, Patrick Luiz Sullivan De Oliveira noted that 'the making of a new Paris was a traumatic process […] Parisians experienced a crisis of identity in an increasingly denaturalized city.'[54]

The outcome of these conversions was a feeling of melancholy. People felt disruption with the traditional order when the concrete old city – in which the tangible existence of the previous generations had resided – vanished, or was relocated. This melancholy was perhaps most unequivocally illustrated in Baudelaire's poem 'Le Cygne.' (1861) In it, Baudelaire complemented explicit declarations such as 'la forme d'une ville / Change plus vite, hélas! que le coeur d'un mortel'[55] with poetic imagery in which he portrayed the remembrance of the loss.

This poem begins with naming Andromaque whose mythical story is full of relevant connotations for the issues of the times Baudelaire analysed in his writings. During the Trojan War, Andromaque lost her husband and was later seized to be a slave in the city that was once ruled by her father. One can approach this tale to be an allegory to Baudelaire's Paris since one can suggest that this city, in a certain point of view, truly belonged to his fathers –

[50] Jordan, 2004: 89
[51] Jordan, 2004: 92
[52] Ibid, 91
[53] 1973: 174
[54] 2015: 741
[55] 1961: 95

predecessors. This affirmation is plausible for the reason that a particular concept of Paris was generated by the deceptive resurrection achieved via French Revolution of 1789 and, most recently, by the Uprising of 1848 in which even Baudelaire himself participated. Yet, Haussmann's constant amendments fabricated the sense of displacement, which the poem depicted in the imagery of 'la négresse.'[56] She was unable to locate her recognisable settings of 'les cocotiers'[57] – those are, needless to say, difficult to imagine in Paris of Baudelaire's milieu, especially if they are forthwith designated by 'la muraille immense du brouillard.'[58] This created sharp contrast, particularly because Paris surroundings were opposed to the description of Africa that was pictured as 'superbe'[59]. By alternating these strongly positive attributes of the lost sphere that one could have no longer reconnected with against a gloomy representation of the present state of being, nostalgia was bluntly brought forward.

Furthermore, this apposition of paralleled environments also served as a murky illustration of an ever-changing city. Paris' population was perplexed by the constant transformation of its surroundings, and so this city can be estimated to act like a maze with both material and ethereal hindrances – to be precise, the city of Paris was, according to this poem, divided by 'muraille' in physical terms and by 'brouillard' in sensual conditions (since the reader's imagination is likely to associate 'muraille' with a feeling of coldness, which entails the connotations of detachment – after all, it is a figure of speech to call someone 'cold' if we feel that he is being emotionally disconnected). On the other hand, Truman claimed that Baudelaire saw 'the Old Paris and the New Paris together; a combination of the myth of an eternal Paris and the changing landscape of a modern Paris that together form a unique tableau.'[60] If one takes this analysis into consideration, then it is possible to interpret 'muraille' as denoting present physical constructions, while 'brouillard' referencing all the buildings which were lost – yet, their obliteration was so recent that their images were still tangible in one's memory. Additionally, Baudelaire also mentioned that he was strolling past 'le Nouveau Carrousel'[61] and Cecilia Enjuto-Rangel demonstrated how it is another example focusing on the fast juxtaposition of altered scenes when she showed 'the connection between Paris and the changing images of the animals and carriages on a moving carousel.'[62] This

[56] Ibid, 96
[57] Ibid
[58] Ibid
[59] Ibid
[60] 2010: 4
[61] Baudelaire, 1961: 95
[62] 2007: 143

metaphor indicates very persuasive illusory: the relentless movement of differenced panorama as observed from a turning carousel that projected a quick succession of visions, while each one of them was unrelated to the precedent one – and that makes one think of Paris' new buildings which rapidly infiltrated previously familiar streets and changed the domicile environment as if in the blink of an eye – or, equally, in one turn of a carousel.

Haussmann also enabled the formation of the arcades. These architectural elements turned out to be of crucial significance to Baudelaire. As Benjamin proposed, 'the crowd is a new subject in lyric poetry,'[63] and the biggest crowd could always be found in these newly founded arcades. The poet's new focus was conditioned by the decrease in the public's positive reception of traditional artistic portrayals: the original subject matter ceased to be relevant for people who lived in big cities and experienced different kinds of sensitivities. As Georg Simmel noted, 'city life has transformed the struggle with nature for livelihood into an inter-human struggle for gain […] the seller must always seek to call forth new and differentiated needs of the lured customer.'[64] One relevant example would be the displays of shopping arcades in which products were organized according a novel pattern of beauty and desire – the arrangement of luxury products substituted the Still Life composition. Baudelaire captured this shift of appreciation in his poem 'Le Vin du solitaire.' (1857) In it, he compared 'le regard singulier d'une femme galante'[65] to 'la lune onduleuse envoie au lac tremblant'[66] and in doing so he paralleled natural idyllic – in other words, the conventional poetic epitome of beauty – with city encounter defined by lascivious glance. However, he expanded this idiomatic expression even further when he mentioned 'le dernier sac d'écus dans les doigts d'un joueur.'[67] It is significant that these worldly hedonistic encounters were included in a poem which was essentially a list of desires. In this manner, through choice of new and unorthodox lyrical subjects, Baudelaire demonstrated the change of contemporary sensibility through the juxtaposition of natural marvels with modern forms of urban love and material wealth; and the indication that all of them were equally a potential source of pleasure.

As aforesaid, arcades, or the contemporary domains of the crowd, could be frequented thanks to recent industrial developments – they provided the population with a sense of security from numerous points of view: firstly, to recapitulate, 'before Haussmann wide

[63] 1973: 60
[64] 1969: 57
[65] 1961: 125
[66] Ibid
[67] Ibid

pavements were rare, and the narrow ones afforded little protection from vehicles;'[68] and secondly, due to public lighting, as 'the first gas-lamps burned in the arcades.'[69] For what is more, 'this increased safety in the city made the crowds feel at home in the open streets even at night,'[70] and this led to 'the great period of *noctambulisme*,'[71] in which the stores were opened until late and people spent their nights in the streets. One's fear of the darkness was in this time supplanted with the thirst for the adventure, at the end of which one might have acquired the trophy of a luxury product. These sceneries then fabricated the perfect décor for the figure of *flâneur*, who was free to experience contact with a large amount of different subject matters for his poetry.

Baudelaire's notion of night strolling was dissimilar to the popular one. He did not appear to share the illusion of safety introduced by streetlights; on the contrary, consistent with his writings, night signified a sinister – although exciting – time to him. In the prose poem 'Le Crépuscule du soir' (1869) he stated that 'le crépuscule excite les fous.'[72] Moreover, in the narrative of this prose poem he ignored the feeling of street lamp induced security when he claimed that the darkness of night had supernatural effects on these *fous* as it caused their madness and death. However, he differentiated himself from other people when he exclaimed that 'la nuit, qui mettait ses ténèbres dans leur esprit, fait la lumière dans le mien'[73] and that suggests his exhilaration about new opportunity for night street meetings. To be exact, the reason for Baudelaire's excitement lied in the fact that darkness invoked 'ces feux de la fantaisie qui ne s'allument bien que sous le deuil profond de la Nuit.'[74]

His notion of the night's attraction was then based on an analogy between light and darkness. The Bible possibly inspired him, for in it, God and the greatness of his spirit are denoted most simplistically as the light, and the darkness is traditionally associated with the notion of sin. It can be exemplified by Psalm 139. In the narrative, the occurrence of something sinister is illustrated as the surrounding darkness, and God is portrayed as the opposite to that power for 'even the darkness is not dark to you; [him]/ the night is bright as the day,/ for darkness is as light with you [him].'[75] In the gloomy description of Baudelaire's nocturnal streets, night's blackness acted as a certain kind of sinister curtain that, owing to

[68] 1973: 36
[69] Ibid, 50
[70] Ibid
[71] Ibid
[72] 1979: 124
[73] Ibid
[74] Ibid, 125
[75] christianity.com

produced invisibility, enabled malefactors to perform 'les vagues terreurs de ces affreuses nuits.'[76] But the fact that this ominous environment actually offered creative potential was crucial for Baudelaire – it liberated *fantaisie* that he depicted, paradoxically, as the enlightening force. Furthermore, it appears that Baudelaire employed similar aesthetics for the assessment of women's attractiveness. In 'Le Désir de peindre' (1869) Baudelaire illustrated the portrait of a marvellous woman who, in accordance with romantic definition of the sublime, was both beautiful and terrifying. He defined her to be a combination of darkness (which might be the emblem of sin) and of light (which he associated with happiness) when he pictured her to be 'un soleil noir'[77] and

> 'la lune [...] non pas la lune blanche des idylles, qui ressemble à une froide mariée, mais la lune sinistre et enivrante, suspendue au fond d'une nuit orageuse et bousculée par les nuées qui courent; non pas la lune paisible et discrète visitant le sommeil des hommes purs, mais la lune arrachée du ciel, vaincue et révoltée, que les Sorcières thessaliennes contraignent durement à danser sur l'herbe terrifiée.'[78]

In this allegory, Baudelaire assigned the idea of beauty's essence to the darkness, yet not to the absolute one, but rather to the one that was pierced by streams of light. For this reason, he applied oxymoron of *soleil noir*, as he searched for a star whose emission was contrary to the natural lighting of its environment. Likewise, it seems that he was not utterly pleased with the classic imagery of the moon – instead, he envisaged a stormy night and a moon whose light was blocked by a heap of clouds – and so it was enabled to cast light only when the skies cleared up for a moment. In this manner, the example of a moon gained the enhanced effect of the contrast.

It is also crucial to discuss Benjamin's examination of the significance of artificial lighting in Baudelaire's milieu. Benjamin recorded Stevenson's musing on 'the rhythm with which lamplighters go through the streets and light one lantern after another.'[79] This particular imagery indicates that the act of lighting up was done gradually. Likewise, Baudelaire proclaimed that 'il est doux, à travers les brumes, de voir naître / L'étoile dans l'azur, la lampe à la fenêtre.'[80] He paralleled the illumination of gas lamps with lighting up of stars and described them both to be *doux*. Certainly, just like stars appear to brighten up more and more consistently with the disappearance of the daylight, one can also spot a similar progressive

[76] 1961: 48
[77] 1979: 181
[78] Ibid, 181-182
[79] 1973: 51
[80] 1961: 91

process in Stevenson's memory of gas lamplighters' errands. In this regard, Baudelaire's vision of the dark night with only occasional streams of light resembles Stevenson's melancholy. He did not seem to be interested in absolutes, as was shown in his account of the foreign lands in which 'soleil ne frise qu'obliquement la terre, et les lentes alternatives de la lumière et de la nuit suppriment la variété et augmentent la monotonie, cette moitié du néant.'[81] Baudelaire did not seem to show any curiosity for the exploration of the conceptions of light and darkness in the regular cycle of night and day – he deemed it boring – instead, he was eager to study some sporadic situations of interference which effected unusual relationships that could have produced sharp contrast. Thus, as Baudelaire appeared to be fascinated by these modern apparatuses, it is possible that light inducing elements from his poems were meant to signify actual gas lamps – for the reason that they transformed social norms (namely, the convention that respectable citizens do not leave their houses after sun set because in that time the streets are frequented by malefactors) by acting as facilitators to interesting and previously unthinkable night encounters.

Furthermore, arcades served as a congregation of the masses since these 'interior streets lined with luxury shops and open through iron and glass roofs to the stars, were a wish-image, expressing the bourgeois individual's desire to escape through the symbolic medium of objects from the isolation of his/her subjectivity.'[82] The fantasy of escapism through this setting was not only accomplished by providing one with the illusion of daytime due to the aid of artificial light, it also deconstructed the old-fashioned conception of the interior as well: contrary to the past idea that houses protected the population from the dangers of open streets (that are self-evidently most dangerous during the night time), arcades gave the impression of inviting one inside in full light. This was one of the major themes of Benjamin's unfinished work *The Arcades Project* (1982). He pointed out that the public pathways – which were always perceived to be part of the exterior – suddenly became subordinated to iron shielding within the arcades constructions. This merge of open and enclosed, inside and outside, was further developed with the objects of shop windows, since due to glass' transparency the shops looked as if they expanded into the alleyways. As a result, pedestrians became perplexed about the limitations of the external and the private – in other words, these modern phenomena 'unsettled the world of the shell in a radical way.'[83]

[81] 2014: 464
[82] Buck-Morss, 1986: 103
[83] Benjamin, 2002: 221

In contrast, Baudelaire only resided in these passages – he was not lured into the shops for 'if the arcade is the classical form of the *intérieur*, which is how the *flâneur* sees the street, the department store is the form of the *intérieur*'s decay.'[84] In other words, Baudelaire was not curious about shops and their offer of consumer objects; rather, he took interest in the display of consumers themselves. Benjamin stated that 'the intoxication to which the *flâneur* surrenders is the intoxication of the commodity around which surges the stream of customers.'[85] Baudelaire correspondingly wrote that he was 'le promeneur solitaire et pensif tire une singulière ivresse de cette universelle communion.'[86] In other words, he observed people who were observing shop windows, and so he encountered 'the modern urban experience of viewing the world as if through the plate glass of a shop window. The new economic relations that created vast urban areas and a consumer culture thus had a direct impact on the way poets perceived their surroundings.'[87] Hence, it appears that a certain *mise en abyme* was involved in this scenery: Baudelaire can be almost distinguished as a consumer of the consumer experience for the reason that he seemingly transformed the act of looking at the customers who were looking at consumer products into his own commodity (namely, the subject matter of his poems).

However, I would argue that it is not possible to label Baudelaire's activities as acts of consumerism. His distinction was the search for profound ideals while the ordinary passer-byes were seeking the material articles (Benjamin characterised the bourgeois citizen as 'host of objects'[88]). Baudelaire attempted to capture transcendental experience via the medium of his poems and so it can be argued that they functioned, in a certain extent, as entrances to the otherworldly sensibilities – and these entrances can be, in fact, compared to windows. I have already explored the eerie transitionary qualities of glass in Benjamin's contemplation about its ability to overcome the conceptualisation of inside and outside. Likewise, Baudelaire assigned similar status to windows – as it was illustrated in prose poem 'Les Bienfaits de la lune.' (1869) In it, a celestial entity of moon was projected into human subject through the medium of window. Another example of Baudelaire's perception was illustrated in the poem 'À une Madone' (1860) in which he expressed his wish to build an altar for Madonna that was 'loin du désir mondain et du regard moqueur.'[89] However, in the next line of this poem he

[84] Benjamin, 1973: 55
[85] 1973: 55
[86] 1979: 85
[87] Lewis, 2007: 46
[88] 1973: 46
[89] 1961: 63

listed the materials for this altar to be ‘une niche, d'azur et d'or tout émaillée’[90] and one can certainly identify these expensive materials to be some of the worldly desires, especially in the milieu of spawning consumerism. On the other hand, the denouement of this contradiction was introduced when poem’s narrator explained that the origin of these substances was in his poetic labour – to be more specific, in his ‘Vers polis, treillis d'un pur metal/ Savamment constellé de rimes de cristal.’[91] Hence, Baudelaire attributed great worth to his poetry, and he placed it above the luxurious merchandise – while comparing his verses with the spiritually substance-less items nonetheless, perhaps in order to explain true evaluation of his literary efforts to a common reader-consumer of his times. As Robert Kaufman concluded, ‘lyric poetry bears a special, radical relation to conceptuality as such and, in modernity, to determinate conceptuality's socioeconomic identity [it is necessary to perceive it] as exchange value and as the commodity.’[92]

This approach can be explained by Baudelaire’s poetry which confirms that he was aware of the limitations on lyrical poetry in his times and on the capability of his readers’ to recognise and appreciate what he considered to be a text of a sublime quality – as it was explicitly illustrated in his poem ‘Je n'ai pas pour maîtresse une lionne illustre.’ (1875) He exclaimed that ‘Pour avoir des souliers elle a vendu son âme /Mais le bon Dieu rirait si, près de cette infâme, / Je tranchais du Tartufe et singeais la hauteur, / Moi qui vends ma pensée et qui veux être auteur.’[93] Firstly, Baudelaire perceived that the current social situation was exemplified by the obsession with material consumables – he claimed that one was willing to trade the transcendental property of one’s soul for earthly luxury, such as shoes. Nonetheless, at the same time, he also refused to judge the contemporary shoppers by acknowledging his own stance on the question of the financial gain when he cried out that he was prostituting his ideas to act like his capital. He was likewise dependent on the demands of the market, and he recognised the fact that he needed to adapt his divine art to these demands.

Baudelaire similarly described the decay of his current society caused by phenomenon of obsessions with objects in ‘Au Lecteur’ (1855) in the following verses: ‘Aux objets répugnants nous trouvons des appas; / Chaque jour vers l'Enfer nous descendons d'un pas, / Sans horreur, à travers des ténèbres qui puent.’[94] This poem’s narrator correspondingly affiliated himself with the rest of the degenerates via the employment of ‘nous,’ which

[90] Ibid
[91] Ibid
[92] 2010: 254 - 255
[93] 1961: 225
[94] 1961: 5

suggested his inclusion. Although the most striking is the epiphany at the end of this poem, in which he declared his liaison by uttering '— Hypocrite lecteur, — mon semblable, — mon frère!'[95] Yet another example could be found in poem 'Beatrice' (1861) in which he mentioned demons who came to mock him. They teased him that he 'vouloir intéresser au chant de ses douleur'[96] and made it clear that he failed that determination – they pronounced that he was 'histrion en vacances'[97] who solely 'jouer artistement son rôle.'[98] Hence, demons eloquently stated that Baudelaire was unsuccessful in his effort to attract anyone's attention by his genuine art and so he was left to *pretend* that he executed poetry in order to sell his work – while, on the contrary, he executed this imitation skilfully, *like an artist* (needless to say that this exact formulation enhanced demons' scorn).

Additionally, the fact that in the aforementioned citation from 'Je n'ai pas pour maîtresse une lionne illustre' (1875) Baudelaire doubted his stature as an author – he claimed he wanted to be one rather than acknowledging that he actually was one – indicating that he was endeavouring solely to make a profit from his ideas and to do so he necessarily stripped them of their artistic quality. This seemed to be a good strategy in his milieu since he was convinced that his readers were unable to recognise true genius. This view was explicitly expressed in poem 'Le Chien et le flacon' (1869) in which he complained that his dog was not capable of grasping the superior scent of the most exquisite perfume and instead he preferred the smell of faeces. Furthermore, he associated his dog and his audience when he wrote that 'ainsi, vous-même, indigne compagnon de ma triste vie, vous ressemblez au public, à qui il ne faut jamais présenter des parfums délicats qui l'exaspèrent, mais des ordures soigneusement choisies.'[99] Clearly, he criticized public for not being able to recognize the value of his literary attempts. Baudelaire felt the need to subject his writing to the requirements of his current readers, but the vocabulary he employed and the choice of theme can be also recognised as a social commentary on his milieu. As Benjamin noted, Baudelaire's 'work cannot merely be categorised as historical, like anyone else's, but it intended to be so and understood itself as such.'[100] Benjamin also cultivated this notion in his essay 'Eduard Fuchs: Collector and Historian' (1937) in which he maintained that 'works of art teach that person how their function outlives their creator and how his intentions are left behind. They

[95] Ibid, 6
[96] Ibid, 135
[97] Ibid
[98] Ibid
[99] 1979: 70
[100] 1973: 117

demonstrate how the reception of the work by its contemporaries becomes a component of the effect which a work of art has upon us today.'[101] It is supported by Benjamin's another essay 'The Author as Producer' (1970) in which he claimed that 'the rigid, isolated object (work, novel, book) is of no use whatsoever. It must be inserted into the context of living social relations'[102]

In his times, Baudelaire's works were commercially unsuccessful. Holland captured the fact that he 'had great difficulty placing his writing in the Parisian press. From the perspective of his actual market self-prostitution, the poet's aspirations […] are a form of imaginary revenge enacted by a consummate consumer for the humiliation of having to sell himself as producer on the open market.'[103] Benjamin likewise portrayed the instance in which Baudelaire exploited the vanity of publishers when 'he offered the same manuscript to several papers at the same time and authorized reprints without indicating them as such.'[104] In spite of this, it was not an unusual practice in times when the literary market was identified simply just as another form of commodity as proved by the new literary genre of feuilleton. This was the most popular written medium of these times. As Berman stated, 'many of the greatest nineteenth century writers used this form to present themselves to a mass public,'[105] even in spite of the fact that it was recognised to be a channel of questionable quality. Feuilleton writers were often disputed on their actual authorship – for example, Benjamin alluded to the anecdote of the present day which alleged that even Dumas himself did not know precisely how many novels he got published.[106] The relationship between the renowned authors and tabloid was employed on the basis of mutual prosperity: on one hand, writers used feuilleton to enhance their reputation due to its wide circulation among Parisian cafés; on the other hand, newspapers' revenue was also credited to the popularity of famous authors/ contributors. In this regard, actual authorship was not necessitated, as the newspapers did not aim to promote the intellectual quality of serial novels; instead, the author's approved signature was their exclusive goal, for what they were selling was the popular figure's big name. Benjamin respectively declared that 'the master's name is the fetish of the art market.'[107]

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[101] 1975: 28
[102] 1988: 87
[103] 2006: 245
[104] 1973: 33
[105] 1983: 44
[106] 1973: 30
[107] 1975: 56

Conversely, one can contemplate if this historical occurrence of feuilleton removed the works of (at least seemingly) some of the most acclaimed writers of the times out of the French strong literary tradition. This tradition is perceived to be exemplified by the exquisite novels which stressed the eternal quality of national canon and the creative genius of the author – however, in the nineteenth century these features appeared to be replenished by the momentary cravings of the crowd. At the same time as literature was converted into being accessible to masses, it was also compelled to modify its character according to the requisites of this newly acquired body of a readership. To summarize, Benjamin captures the heart of this concern in the following statement: 'the consideration of mass art leads to a revision of the concept of genius. It reminds us not to give priority to the inspiration, which participates in the becoming of the work of art, over and against the demand (Faktur) which alone allows inspiration to come to fruition.'[108]

The aforementioned points foreshadow the definition of the contemporary readers to whom Baudelaire attempted to appeal – his objective was to write for masses whose interest was ignited by the well-known and common writer, while he struggled to express his original insights. In poem 'L'Albatros' (1859) Baudelaire compared poets to this bird whom he called 'prince des nuées.'[109] He described the downfall of this majestic bird after it got caught by sea men – once they displaced the bird from its natural habitat, he appeared to be 'maladroits et honteux'[110] and 'piteusement;'[111] and sea men mocked it. Subsequently, Baudelaire drew a parallel between poet and bird insinuating that poet's righteous place was in the skies – which connoted position out of this world, in a certain spiritual sphere. Thus, the fact that Baudelaire situated himself to worldly exile 'au milieu des huées'[112] explained the reason why his art was ridiculed – as 'ses ailes de géant l'empêchent de marcher.'[113] Similarly, Benjamin defined Baudelaire's readers in the following terms: 'will power and the ability to concentrate are not their strong points; they are familiar with the 'spleen' which kills interest and receptiveness.'[114] These readers, a little bit bored and melancholic, were craving for stirs (just like sea men from the aforementioned poem – they caught albatross solely 'pour

[108] Ibid, 38
[109] 1961: 12
[110] Ibid, 11
[111] Ibid
[112] Ibid
[113] Ibid
[114] 1973: 110

s'amuser'[115]); and that was the reason why the feuilletons experienced such a huge popularity in Baudelaire's times. Changes in Parisian architecture caused by Haussmann were observable, but Baudelaire's literature and its demand displayed resulting changes in the sensibilities of Parisians of the Second French Empire.

In conclusion, Paris of the Second French Empire underwent major transformation – conceptually and materially. Napoleon II launched policies whose principal focus was the establishment of social order; they were accomplished through varied strategies of classification and regulation. In effect, the impact of these reforms, in conjugation with technological advancement and urban alienation altered citizens' perception and engagement with their surroundings – they became anesthetized towards genuine experience, thus forming crowds of mass consumers. As a result, this newly founded body of audience preferred superficial expenditure that projected principal change in the working conditions of artists. The art market was developed correspondingly to its audience, who cultivated an inclination toward shallow literary genres, such as feuilletons and sensational newspaper headlines. The immense commercial success of these genres proved that Paris' citizens were the most suitable examples for the shock experience of modernity. As Benjamin noted, 'there has been no success on mass scale in lyric poetry since Baudelaire;'[116] adding that Baudelaire's poems were initially only read by few – rather, their success was slowly built throughout the decades. Baudelaire's literary persona then can be regarded as the last pioneer of lyric poetry. His attempts to restore *l'art pour l'art* refinement were futile, as the few privileged geniuses exhausted their influential positions – and Baudelaire was compelled to observe the 'vain crowds' indulging themselves in what he regarded to be articles of ignoble taste. Ultimately, even though he filled his verses with a melancholy for the past and lamented his current position and lack of appreciation, Baudelaire converted masses' passions into the subject matter for his poetry – in which he ridiculed them and often proclaimed himself to be superior. But how genuine was his superiority, and to what extent did he achieve the autonomy of his art from this mass scaled industry? Via his own works, he admitted tailoring his literature to the requirements of the market; he even lied to his publishers about the originality of his own work. On the other hand, he never ceased in seeking for the everlasting ideal. He endeavoured to capture it in the fleeting moments and pleasures that were offered to

[115] 1961: 11
[116] 1973: 110

him through the experience of modernity. This seems to be of particular importance since Benjamin also stressed that only the complete understanding of the present could have lead towards the formation of the cultural past. That is why the figure of Baudelaire, a true poet of his own era, is of great worth toward understanding traditional artistic production in modern times.

Chapter One: Bibliography

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Futurists' Tomorrows versus de Chirico's Timelessness

In this chapter, I am going to examine the ways in which selected Italian artists – namely, Futurists and Giorgio de Chirico – confronted modernity of their times. After Italian unification before the nineteenth century, the country experienced a boom in industrial production – Carlo Ciccarelli and Stefano Fenoaltea confirmed that, especially after 1881, there was 'the diffusion of factory production, the increase in the rate of industrial growth, the cyclical upswings of the 1880s and of the belle époque.'[117] New technologies were invented, and that lead towards wide-ranging mechanisation of production – it was most notably observed in the period between 1871 and 1911 when 'there was a generalised shift from an early artisanal way of producing to the modern factory system.'[118] In other words, the patterns of conventional production – which in Italy had long-standing tradition of hand-made, artisanal practice – were substituted by machinery since technological advancement allowed them to be both less expensive and more efficient. As a result, the biggest cities 'attracted an ever-larger share of Italy's industry as factories displaced artisans.'[119] However, it is of great significance that this shift – from artisanal and traditional practices to technological advancement – was also perceivable in the cultural industry; I will attempt to inspect it while analysing the stylistic technique, methodology and subject matter of the Futurists and de Chirico.

However, the processes of industrialisation and modernisation of the production were not homogenous in their pace. The notorious 'industrial triangle' was formed in the North of Italy whose impact is still perceivable nowadays in the difference of prosperity in Italy's provinces. For that reason, ever since the late nineteenth century, major investment in infrastructure – particularly concerning the constructions of railway tracks – was necessitated, for it 'allowed the industry of the north to capture and exploit the markets of the south.'[120] The development of new infrastructure necessitated extensive works which changed the landscape – it was noted that 'transport technology had been unchanged for centuries, and Italy's land-locked cities had long remained much as the Renaissance had left them; with the coming of railways and tramways they burst out of their medieval walls and embarked on

[117] 2013: 65
[118] Ciccarelli and Proietti 2013: 272
[119] Ciccarelli and Fenoaltea, 2013: 68
[120] Ibid

unprecedented growth.'[121] Yet, it was not only the landscapes which underwent radical alteration on account of the expansion of railways to the small villages – likewise, the perception of the citizens from these small villagers ought to adjust as they did not experience such fast means of travelling before. It was not only small villagers who experienced the previously unknown speed in those times for in big cities, automobiles were introduced. Soon after, the first planes were also invented at the beginning of the twentieth century. It did not take long before people considered them a necessity, rather than novel curiosity – as can be attested by the account of Italian officer Giulio Douhet who remarked that 'the sky is about to become another battlefield no less important than the battlefields on land and sea.'[122] In this chapter, I will likewise review the changed patters of perception due to the speed and transformation of modern environment; and the ways in which Futurists and de Chirico comprehended them and subsequently channelled them into artistic expression.

Furthermore, in Italy, the thirst for modernisation was prevalent in the cultural field as it can be demonstrated by the ministerial magazine 'L'Arte Italiana Decorativa e Industriale' (1890–1911) which was circulated among schools.[123] Annalisa Pesando and Daniela Prina described how, 'with the advent of the new century, the orientations of the magazine moved towards the acceptance of modernity and of European artistic novelties, valued at Paris' 1900 Exhibition […] Moreover, the Commissione welcomed a new member, Primo Levi 'L'Italico,' who encouraged the development of modern art.'[124] This report revealed that cultural authorities of Italy looked up to France's capital for they deemed it to be the most technically advanced – which seemed to be a desirable quality. Both de Chirico and the Futurists were involved with French cultural circles, and I will display these links and explain their implications. In addition, I will also examine their estimation of the critics and the functioning of art market in general.

I.

Filippo Marinetti's 'Le Manifeste du Futurisme' (1909) was firstly published in *Le Figaro*. A plausible explanation for why was the origin of new art movement presented in foreign language to an audience of foreign country was that 'French was still the lingua franca

[121] Ibid, 74
[122] Bowen, 1980: 26
[123] Pesando and Prina, 2012: 42
[124] Ibid, 44

of European intellectual exchange.'[125] In the early twentieth century, Paris was certainly perceived to have the stand of the world's cultural capital, mainly due to the numerous influential painters who resided there. It is also essential to observe that it was the city in which Impressionism originated in the late nineteenth century. This is crucial element for Paris' popular image of the times for the reason that Impressionism was historically the first art movement which overtly disrupted mimetic representation in Western art. The motive was to favour sensory-based perception – as Paul Smith recorded, 'Impressionists themselves stated that they wanted to record sensations, and to develop novel and original techniques in order to do this.'[126] This discontinuation from national canon – which was previously formed of high-skilled, time-honoured painters who paid great attention to every detail – resulted in the outbreak of disapproval from academic circles. As Gerda Gemser and Nachoem Wijnberg noted, 'Impressionists had a particularly difficult time getting their work to be accepted for exhibition in the Salons.'[127] Salons were organised by the French Academy and they were estimated to be the most prestigious art showcases. However, Impressionists gradually gained prestige and success, mainly due to commercial funding of individual art collectors – which 'quickly became a more important source of income than Salon prizes and official patronage.'[128] Thus, Paris did not only signify the city of artistic excellence, it also emblematised the place that enabled revolutionary changes in terms of aesthetics.

Similarly, Futurists were interested in the dislocation of figurative painting as well – Anton Giulio Bragaglia commented that they 'despise the precise, mechanical, glacial reproduction of reality, and take the utmost care to avoid it.'[129] Furthermore, Carlo Carrà claimed in 'The Painting of Sounds, Noise and Smells' (1913) that Impressionists executed 'daring revolution,'[130] however, he added that their efforts were merely 'confused and hesitant.'[131] Nonetheless, he attributed Impressionism to be Futurists' creative inspiration when he assigned it to be Futurists' predecessor – he compared it to a new-born baby whereas he projected Futurists to represent an adult man.[132] It is noteworthy that, in this essay, Carrà also extended his critique to Post- and Neo-Impressionists, and he reproached Georges Seurat personally for his preference of withdrawing 'into static representations in order to obtain [...]

[125] Rainey, 1994: 203
[126] 1995: 165
[127] 2000: 326
[128] Ibid
[129] 1973: 39
[130] 2009: 155
[131] Ibid
[132] Ibid

a systematic application of light.'[133] Seurat is acknowledged as Post-Impressionist painter and the inventor of Pointillism – that is, a technique consisting of applying miniscule dots – or *points* – of two different colours whose pictorial interaction results in the effect of overall harmony. Subsequently, I would like to examine the accuracy of Carrà's instructions and accusations by establishing the extent of Seurat's influence on the early works of Futurists. In order to do so, I will present a comparative analysis of Umberto Boccioni's early painting 'Officine a Porta Romana' (1908)[134] and Seurat's 'La Seine à la grande Jatte, printemps' (1888)[135] since stylistic features of both these works are noticeably similar at first sight.

This resemblance is created on the account of the same system of colour distribution that was employed by both artists – in the two paintings, objects were composed from small and precise *points* of different colours that produced dynamism and in effect attracted one's attention. On the one hand, leaves in Seurat's painting are predominantly green and yellow, therefore consisting from two analogous colours that create placid harmony for they match well in the case they are juxtaposed. The composition of the whole painting is subjected to this basis: most of the space is filled up with light blue that is supported with greens, and the shades of white and light yellow accent the picture. On the other hand, Boccioni's landscape is at first sight more vibrant. His use of complementary colours at full saturation (such as red and green or yellow and purple – both employed on the grass field that dominates the canvas) results in very high contrast. It certainly does not give the impression of 'static representation' or of realistic depiction of light. Likewise, people on the road are emphasized due to the interlock of warm and dark colours that encompasses their figures and shadows as contrasted to white background of the roads. Contrastingly, few individuals are displayed on the grass area, and the choice of colouring makes them appear as if they almost blend in with it.

This particular colour pallet, that favours specific parts of the canvas and on the other hand deliberately excludes differentiation of some objects within the chosen subject matter, characterises the overall symbolism of Boccioni's work. Christine Poggi noted that Futurists held 'the categorical rejection of traditional subjects, such as the nude, the femme fatale, tranquil landscapes, and religious themes.'[136] Instead, they focused on the themes that presented modern life and recent technological development. Scene of this painting depicts people leaving the rural surrounding and heading towards the gates of the city. Behind the

[133] Ibid: 156
[134] see Figure 1
[135] See Figure 2
[136] 2005: 204

gates, one can distinguish buildings with long chimneys indicating that these buildings are factories. This setting of industrial production is juxtaposed with that of agricultural work, and so are the characters who signify each of these domains. While walkers proceeding towards the city are visible and dominant in their full height, most of the workers in the field are small and almost impossible to tell apart from the ground. They are as if on the verge of perishing just like Futurists believed that the old-fashioned labour organisation was, while everyone else progresses towards the promise of an advanced future in the factory-governed city. Simultaneously, this specific part of painting does not only portray the retreat of rural work patterns, it also suggests the expiration of 'tranquil landscapes' as a recognised subject matter in modern work of art and its replacement by urban surroundings that are sites of industrial manufacturing. As Antonio Sant'Elia wrote, 'just as the ancients drew their inspiration in art from the elements of the natural world, so we—materially and spiritually artificial—must find our inspiration in the new mechanical world we have created.'[137]

I would like to return to Seurat's painting, which is actually a detail that can be detected in the left corner of a more detailed study titled 'Un dimanche après-midi à l'Île de la Grande Jatte.' (1884)[138] According to Mary Gedo, this painting was inspired by Édouard Manet's masterpiece 'Le Déjeuner sur l'herbe,' (1862)[139] which is worth of closer examination with regard to my argument. Manet, one of the leading figures of Impressionism, caused scandal when he first presented this painting. However, it is significant that it was not his technique that was the primal concern of the shocked audience (since in the public launch of Impressionism it was painters' inventive technique that was considered to be the major dishonouring of High Art) – even though it is necessary to note rather crude brushwork in the background of this piece. It was actually the portrayed scene that caused some indignation. It is conceivable to claim that Manet in fact followed the tradition of High Art – he depicted conventional subject matter consisting of 'tranquil landscape' with gentlemen whose clothes suggested their higher social class – in accordance to the choice of theme that was expected of every academic painter in those times. Yet, the conflict is created by two women figures who were also included in this painting – as they are reminiscent of bathing nymphs from conventional Renaissance painting; and hence they are distinctly disjoined from both the narrative and the style of this setting. Another woman represents one of the most emblematic genres in the history of Western art – the nude. Except for apparent reasons that suggest the

[137] 2009: 201
[138] see Figure 3
[139] Gedo, 1989: 226-229; see Figure 4

displacement of a nude person in a company of two fully clothed men who are advocated to be of certain superior economic status (and in the early twentieth century a level of morality was, according to general perception, assigned to different social classes[140]), this character was also endowed with an arrogant look that appears to be questioning the viewer of this piece. This is unusual – John Berger noted that in the nude paintings of female models, 'nakedness is not, however, an expression of her own feelings; it is a sign of her submission to the owner's feelings or demands. (The owner of both woman and painting.)'[141] According to this argument, traditional nude painting allows its author and its viewer to possess it fully without any defiance. But the power dynamic of this artwork is rotated: it captured a figure of which modesty, passivity and resulting submission is expected; but, on the contrary, the figure is in fact forward and active as she is subjecting the viewer with her insubordinate glare.

In this case, the juxtaposition and disparagement of different symbols of Western art tradition produces eerie composition with seemingly missing rational connections between them. However, Veerle Thielemans claimed that 'the linking of their [Impressionists] work with canonical masterpieces from earlier realist traditions […] was meant to align their work with exemplary models of realism in the past and embrace those traditions in a new form that could lay claim to universal validity.'[142] It appears that Impressionists – in a manner that could be comparable to Baudelaire's – were searching for the universal quality that could have been expressed with reference to their own time. They honoured the tradition by acknowledging it and making it relatable to their contemporary state of affairs. On the other hand, Futurists were notorious for their ardent efforts to forsake tradition by replacing every element they considered to be outmoded for their own historic era – whether the given feature was identified to be old in the literal or figurative sense. Besides their determination to replace the conventional subject matter, they also ventured to substitute an older generation of artists with the assemblage of young painters (as Bernardo Piciché affirmed, 'the average Futurist was extremely young: Dessy was 13; Morpurgo 15; Mainardi and Sanzin, 16; Enrico (a.k.a Richetto) Santamaria and Enzo Bendetto, 18'[143]). Moreover, they aspired to 'destroy museums, libraries, academies of every sort'[144] for they perceived them to be the spaces where the past dwelled. In other words, their overt resolution was to abort all historical references through the displacement of institutions and subsequently to break with tradition –

[140] Bergen, 1987: 40-43
[141] Berger, 1972: 52
[142]2001: 149–150
[143] 2014: 84
[144] Marinetti, 2009: 51

as Adriana Baranello stated, 'Marinetti was bent on dismantling cultural mythologies and traditions, and creating a new allegory'[145] for the portrayal of his times. Nonetheless, as was shown in the comparative analysis of Boccioni's and Seurat's paintings, early examples of Futurists' work did not achieve the utter originality of their ancestors – even though Boccioni's work introduced some innovative and original features, the resemblance between it and Seurat's painting is evident. Accordingly, in terms of style and technique, early Futurist oeuvre might have represented some extent of innovation, but it did not pioneer the brand new field; it might have broken off from the tradition on account of subject matter, but it have not yet accomplished absolute originality – as promised by the Futurists' artistic movement – via the use of brushstrokes.

There is a certain analogy to this point in already discussed silhouettes on the field of Boccioni's painting – they are so small, they can potentially belong to children. That is reminiscent of Carrà's aforementioned citation in which he described Impressionists as children and Futurists as grown up adults. Perishing characters on the field are feasibly analogous to Impressionists – they are rebuffed in the surrounding that is indicated to disappear gradually as the more evolved structure of a city takes over it; nonetheless, they are still there, still detectable – just like one can spot a semblance in an adult of a child he has once been. Furthermore, in 'We Abjure Our Symbolist Masters, The Last Lovers of the Moon' (1911) Futurists called Baudelaire one of their 'glorious intellectual fathers,'[146] perceptibly with an overt hint of sarcasm. By positing themselves as Baudelaire's sons or Impressionists' maturity, Futurists acknowledged the influence of preceding artists or artistic movements who displayed particular divergence from what was considered to be conventional art form in their times. It indicates that Futurists were wondering if the total obliteration of past culture might be achievable – in fact, Marinetti confessed that they were: 'the summation and continuation of our ancestors—maybe! Suppose it so! But what difference does it make? We don't want to listen! . . . Woe to anyone who repeats those infamous words to us!'[147]

Nonetheless, Futurists' confidence in stylistic experimentation developed with time. One can establish this by studying Gino Severini's painting 'Forme in espansione' (1914)[148]. In this latter Futurists' creation, one can discern definite separation from their earlier aesthetics – it is an abstract painting with seemingly no figurative elements. It can be argued

[145] 2010: 120
[146] 2009: 93
[147] Marinetti, 2009: 53
[148] see Figure 5

that the influence of pointillism is still noticeable as canvas is divided into geometrical shapes – and in each of these individual outlines there are typically two colours applied through numerous small dots. However, even though these dots within one specific contour tend to be of analogous colours, the overall immense dynamism of the painting was generated on the account of large shapes located alongside to each other as these are of complementary colours: there are oranges in opposition to blues and violets; and reds at variance with greens. As a result, the painting is full of bright colours whose clash destabilises the stimulation of one's eye for the reason that people are not typically accustomed to encounter such an intense visual sensation.

On the other hand, urbanism and modernity introduced previously unknown visual stimuli that formulated Futurists' common artistic vision. Benjamin recorded how the generation of the early twentieth century was placed centrally to the shock of modernity. He defined it by examination of Freud's analysis – he concluded that one of the most important of consciousness' functions is the protection against stimuli.[149] However, due to extremely sudden changes of the contemporary environment these stimuli were suddenly present at all times, constantly. As a result of their excessed frequency one's protective mechanism was consequentially anesthetized. As Erika Kerruish noted, 'modernity radically reorders perception in its production of relentless stimuli. The noise and business of the modern city is one source of shock […] The intensity and pace of stimuli in these environments overwhelm the individual, who does not have the capacity to relate sense experiences to each other or consider their meaning for itself.'[150] Benjamin defined this phenomenon as a sudden alienation - he comprehended it as a form of discontinuity from one's knowledge. He illustrated the effect of estrangement of ever-changing modern life when he claimed that 'a generation that had gone to school in horse-drawn streetcars now stood in the open air, amid a landscape in which nothing was the same except the clouds and, at its centre, in a force field of destructive torrents and explosions, the tiny, fragile human body.'[151]

Futurists likewise explored new sources of external impetuses. Consistent with Benjamin's argument, Marinetti observed that modernity 'have completely transformed our sensibility and our mentality as men of the twentieth century.'[152] However, he was rather enthusiastic observer of the novel transformation of daily life – such as when he expressed his

[149] 1973: 157
[150] 2012: 3
[151] 1999: 732
[152] 2009: 97

refusal of 'the decorative and precious aesthetic of […] the unique and irreplaceable, elegant, suggestive, exquisite adjective. I have no wish to suggest an idea of sensation by means of passeist graces and affectations: I want to seize them brutally and fling them in the reader's face.'[153] This assertion, even though it addressed poetry, can be likewise adapted to the medium of visual art in consideration of Severini's painting since it lacks any decorative elements or technically detailed study of the uniqueness of certain subject matter; instead, it is a 'brutal' attack on the sensibility of one's eye. Furthermore, Marinetti also described the transformed pattern of receptiveness when he depicted the portrayal of a man who was faced with some grandiose news of modernity in the following terms: 'He disdains subtleties and shadings, and in haste he will assault your nerves with visual, auditory, olfactory sensations, just as their insistent pressure in him demands.'[154] Along these lines, Marinetti confirmed that the experience of modernity is susceptible to drastic sensations. In both above-mentioned statements, Marinetti formulated the conception of artistic assault as a response to these sensations, which was correspondingly represented as particularly violent act. It appears that both Marinetti and Benjamin shared the opinion that modern experience was a powerful, ceaselessly attacking force; yet Marinetti's perception on the subjects to this reality is contrary to that of Benjamin's one: he identified fighters who likewise acted 'brutally' in response to their surroundings rather than passive 'tiny, fragile human bodies.' This apposition was also recorded by Carrà's idioms of power in above-mentioned 'The Painting of Sounds, Noise and Smells' (1913). He portrayed Futurists to be in position of strength when compared to their ancestors: in addition to shown example of an active 'adult man *in full control of his powers*'[155] as opposed to the defenceless 'first breath of life,'[156] Futurists also emblematised 'sounds and noises'[157] as contrasted with mere 'mumblings.'[158]

I would now like to return to Severini's work in order to confirm illustrated Futurists' discourse in one of their artistic creation. In the middle of this painting, there is the outline of what might represent the human figure – one is likely to make this assumption due to oval form of skin colour that could indicate the head, with green cap and blue torso. This 'figure' is central to the piece, and it gives the impression that geometrical structures are emerging from it. The title of this work possibly supports this analysis, as the fact that the form is expanding

[153] Marinetti, 2009: 150
[154] Ibid: 145
[155] Carrà, 2009: 155
[156] Ibid
[157] Ibid
[158] Ibid

presupposes the existence of some core from which it can inflate. It is plausible then that this painting displays the power relations that figure discharges, and accordingly the reaction for every of its action – hence, the explanation for the contravening shapes and clashing colours. This interpretation is also supported with Bragaglia's imperative that 'a precise analytical knowledge of the essential properties of the effect, and of its causes, are essential'[159] for any Futurist painter. Consequently, it is likely that Severini's painting is giving a picture of exactly the same experience: modern man, who is constantly confronting copious amount of stimuli from his surroundings.

In addition to novel sensations that modern cities offered, it was also less palpable changes of modernity that influenced art production within the era in which Futurists operated. As Walter Adamson remarked, 'by the end of the nineteenth century, it was fully apparent to European artists and intellectuals that there was simply no way to opt out of commodity culture.'[160] This was a fact that was already acknowledged by Baudelaire – as examined in Chapter One of my thesis. It is notable that both Futurists and Baudelaire seemingly attempted to surpass the condition of their current pre-capitalist art markets – in which demand dictated production – by disconnecting the worth of art from materialist criteria. They disputed individuals who apportioned value – for example, Futurists exclaimed that 'the paid critics […] condemn Italian art to ignominy and a state of true prostitution,'[161] or that 'the prostitution of the great glories from the musical past, turned into insidious offensive weapons against budding talent.'[162] Hence, both Baudelaire and Futurists expressed concerns about 'appraised conformism that sells' dogma. On the other hand, unlike Baudelaire, Futurists never explicitly approved of (or admitted their own) creative prostitution for the sake of commercial market – they declared that those 'who, after much self-sacrifice, succeed in obtaining the patronage of the great publishers, to whom they are bound by a hangman's contract, illusory and humiliating, represent a class of slaves, cowardly, sold out.'[163] They claimed that they valued artistic liberty above financial appreciation – in fact, they explicitly proposed to 'keep away from commercial and academic environments, disdaining them, and instead preferring a modest life over the large profits which mean that art has to sell out.'[164] On the other hand, Barbara Pezzini showed that these statements were

[159] 1973: 42
[160] 2010: 867
[161] Boccioni, Carrà, Russolo, Balla, and Severini, 2009: 63
[162] Pratella, 2009: 77
[163] Ibid, 77-78
[164] Ibid, 79

hypocritical as 'the Futurists had sonorously proclaimed their contempt for commerce, especially for the old-masters trade, and yet they exhibited in private galleries.'[165]

Furthermore, Boccioni opposed the conventional idea of an acclaimed artist persona when he claimed that 'the public always denies that one can call something a masterpiece if its author is still living, a man who eats, drinks, and makes love just like the rest of us, one whom they can see and know. . . .'[166] This criticism evidently opposed the cult of elitist artists, who were largely renowned in the past centuries – one can contrast it with Baudelaire's self-proclaimed identity of the supreme, out of this world poet. Yet, Boccioni's new model of an artist of the twentieth century was the commonplace person who took pleasure in exactly the same activities as his audience did, and was therefore much more relatable. Benjamin described this process as 'the adjustment of reality to the masses and of the masses to reality.'[167] However, the adjustment of Futurist art did not consider solely in the assumptions of audience's intellectual approachability, it also accounted for the physical accessibility. In 'The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction' (1936) Benjamin further debated the shift in the availability of art for the masses, as opposed to the past in which the display of masterpieces was only available to very exclusive and small group of wealthy aristocrats. Futurists adjusted the equation 'art of noble subject matter intended for the audience of nobility' to 'art of everyday for everyone.' As Adamson commented, Marinetti took advantage of 'rising society of consumerism, which is in turn predicated on mass appeal, that is, on the greatest possible breadth of appeal.'[168] He organised art demonstrations and poetry readings at football stadiums, amphitheatres, or any other spaces of great capacity; and charged little or no entrance fee[169] - he 'achieved his success not by addressing only an educated elite, but by speaking in a public forum to a wider audience.'[170] These public events were also thoughtfully publicised – Marinetti designed many posters himself.[171] These possessed date and place of the event like any other regular poster. Although, in addition to these commonplace features, they also contained an original artwork by Marinetti. Posters were then mechanically reproduced and thousands of copies of a work of art were in this manner redistributed all over the city – they were displayed at public

[165] 2013: 472
[166] 2009: 193
[167] 1999: 217
[168] 2010: 872
[169] Rainey, 1994: 200-203
[170] Ibid, 202
[171] see Figure 6

spaces, within reach of everyone. As a result, 'through the vehicle of advertising the avant-garde had invaded the great cities and so realized one of the Futurist ambitions: to leave the museum and extend art into the streets and public spaces.'[172] Thus, their art depicting the commonplace modern experience of the urban streets invaded the streets like their mirrors; and in doing so the paintings reached out to the audience – ordinary modern citizens.

II.

In the second part of this chapter, I would like to present Giorgio de Chirico who was the contemporary of Futurists and likewise preoccupied with the task of capturing the perpetually present changes of modernity in the most appropriate approach. However, de Chirico's outlook on this task was extremely dissimilar to that of Futurists'. He did not call for the break with tradition via the change of artistic technique like Futurists did. Rather, similarly to Manet's painting I discussed in Part I, he re-assessed the classical symbols of *Maestros'* paintings by making them into emblems that were more relatable to the contemporary condition of de Chirico and his fellow modern men. In order to illustrate de Chirico's stance, I would like to begin with analysis of his painting 'The Uncertainty of the Poet.' (1913)[173] The composition of this painting provokes an eerie sensation at first sight for it includes an incomplete torso of an ancient sculpture, a steam train, a branch covered in bananas and a building whose architectural structure is reminiscent of ancient arcades. There is no evident connection between these elements – train and bananas are both the symbols of modernity (trains signify previously unknown speed that only a machine can generate; and as Rosemary Barrow noted, bananas were 'common in Europe only after importation from the Caribbean, they became a fact of European life around 1900, and in de Chirico's painting they function as symbols of a modern world'[174]) – and these two objects are then displaced in the antique world which was built from the props of the statue and building. Albeit, no straightforward relationship can be detected between *any* (two) of these objects – to be specific, even though train and bananas were both modern discoveries in those times in the Western world, they are not related to each other in any direct way since the former is European invention and the latter is exotic import; one is a construction made of iron while the other is soft, organic fruit; and so forth. Juxtaposition of these elements is evocative of

[172] Salaris, 1994: 122
[173] see Figure 7
[174] 2005: 365

Manet's painting I discussed in Part I – and I am going to argue that it functions on the similar model of modern engagement with the past tradition as well.

This idea of distorted imagery was presented in de Chirico's essay 'On Mystery and creation,' (1913) in which he claimed that it is

> 'important that we should rid art of all that it has contained of *recognizable material* to date, all familiar subject-matter, all traditional ideas, all popular symbols must be banished forthwith. More important still, we must hold enormous faith in ourselves: it is essential that the revelation we receive, the conception of an image which embraces a certain thing, which has no sense in itself, which has no subject, which means *absolutely nothing* from the logical point of view, I repeat, it is essential that such a revelation or conception should speak so strongly in us, evoke such agony or joy, that we feel compelled to paint, compelled by an impulse even more urgent than the hungry desperation which leads a man to tearing at a piece of bread like a savage beast.'[175]

In this statement, de Chirico explicitly ordered for the discontinuation of traditional subject matter. He promoted certain subjective, unconscious association that was not necessarily conditioned to the principles of logic – in other words, he demanded for the creative power of artist's mind to be liberated from the rules of conventional arrangement with correlating constituents. One can contrast it with the traditional category of Still Life paintings which usually depicted table on top of which there were several common objects – even though each of these objects was encompassing strong symbolic connotations, at the first sight all of these articles denoted themselves and so they appeared to be appropriately fitting for the particular setting. But de Chirico opposed this methodology, and it is paradoxical that his instructions were consistent with Futurists' ideas – as Marinetti believed in liberating 'wireless imagination'[176] which was expressed in literature by 'the absolute freedom of images or analogies, expressed with disconnected words [...] Until now writers have been restricted to immediate analogies.'[177] This rejection of the comprehensive entirety of representation can be assigned to the disintegration of senses once they were conflicted with external stimuli in the realm of modern experience. The fragmentation was a notable theme of modern artists – as it was established in my previously studied examples of Marinetti's writings and Severini's 'Forme in espansione' (1914). Similarly, in 'The Uncertainty of the

[175] 1968: 401
[176] 2009: 146
[177] Ibid

Poet' (1913) de Chirico depicted the nature of modern world and its disintegration through the thoughtful stylisation of elements from the ancient world – to be specific, Barrow noted that 'de Chirico's damaged torso, a symbol of a fragmented antiquity, can thus be seen as signifying not only the place of the ancient in the modern, but also a fragmented modem identity'[178] due to its appearance with visible deterioration.

Correspondingly, de Chirico's assertion can be related to Futurists' rhetoric on the creative force since both of these thoughts seemed to perceive creativity as an aggressive power. The unbound creativity from de Chirico's account was capable of eliciting reactions of primal instincts – as was portrayed by the imagery of a hungry man brutally tearing bread. This metaphor proposed specific discontinuity from the posture of collected modern man and his reversion to the primitive brute. It is analogous to Marinetti's aforementioned comments on the paralysation of one's coherent response to some grandiose modern news (see Part I) – and to add to the previously cited passages, Marinetti declared that 'the rush of steam-emotion will burst the steampipe of the sentence, the valves of punctuation, and the regular clamp of the adjective. Fistfuls of basic words without any conventional order. The narrator's only preoccupation: to render all the vibrations of his "I."'[179] It is likewise the *primitive* 'I' demonstrated in this account – for the reason that it was governed by emotions (of excitement) that came forward and disrupted the stature of a civilised man ruled by the reason and refined etiquette whilst his 'I' clashed with the sensations of the modern world. To be explicit, de Chirico portrayed a 'beast' who shows no decorum while it eats and Marinetti depicted another 'beast' who shows no decorum while it speaks.

Evidently, a certain oxymoron was thus produced: the modern world appeared to convert its subject towards primitive behaviour. However, such a viewpoint would no longer be contradictory if one considered the existence of cyclical time – indeed, it is liable that de Chirico's formulation alluded to this philosophical theory given the account of his paintings and writings. While the Futurists identified the modernity as the progress, and by disregarding the past they advocated that the ideal is palpable only through enduring advancement of the future; de Chirico did not regard progress as a truthful paradigm in a world defined by Sisyphusian condition in which every advancement was followed by the inevitable fall back to the beginning. Marianne Martin noted that 'whereas the manically inclined Futurists were, however, fired by a Bergsonian faith in creative evolution, the ironic, brooding De Chirico was more in sympathy with the notion of perpetual becoming as

[178]Barrow, 2005: 348
[179] 2009: 145

enunciated by Heraclitus, whom he called "the most profound Greek philosopher I know."'[180] This influence offers elucidation on the juxtaposition of modern and ancient elements that is notable especially in de Chirico's 'Metaphysical paintings' (1911-1919) which I am going to focus on – for Heraclitus believed that 'l'universalité du devenir [...] pris dans sa totalité est circulaire.'[181]

De Chirico's prestige was initially acquired due to his series of 'Metaphysical paintings.' (1911-1919) As Edward Henning noted, 'during this period he created his highly regarded paintings of Italian squares, piazzas, and empty streets flanked by arcades and containing images of classical sculptures, trains, looming smokestacks, stalks of bananas, and artichokes.'[182] However, it is not merely the architectural objects of arcades and traditional Greek statues that produced the sensations of antiquity – it is also the atmosphere they created once positioned alongside with modern constituents. In one of Futurists' manifestos, 'The Art of Noise,' (1913) Luigi Russolo noted that 'in older times life was completely silent. In the nineteenth century, with the invention of machines, Noise was born. Today, Noise is triumphant and reigns supreme over the sensibility of men..'[183] Nonetheless, it is remarkable that in de Chirico's works the feeling of silence was manifested almost in material terms, even in spite of the addition of modern developments, such as trains. For example, Paul Éluard described the atmosphere of his paintings in poem 'Giorgio de Chirico' (1924) in which he asserted that they were composed from 'les murs [qui] filaient blanc autour de mon silence.'[184] Furthermore, in his essay 'On Mystery and Creation' (1913) de Chirico commented that 'what I hear is valueless, only what I see is living, and when I close my eyes my vision is even more powerful.'[185] It is possible to interpret this statement as the expression of loneliness – since de Chirico was renounced to the limits of his own consciousness due to his refusal to connect with his surrounding physical environment via the medium of sight or hearing. In fact, there are only few human characters depicted in this series of paintings. They are usually distanced from the spectator – for example, in 'Mistero e malinconia di una strada' (1914)[186] the frame permits only the sight of shadows, but not of their owners. In 'Piazza

[180] 1978: 346
[181] Patri, 1958: 129
[182]1983: 140
[183]2009: 133
[184] 1968: 143
[185] 1968: 401
[186] see Figure 8

d'Italia,' (1913)[187] two men are depicted in the far background – but they are shaking hands, facing each other and so consequentially, the viewer is unable to form any relationship with these figures. Furthermore, these characters appear to be rather insignificant – they are of very small stature in comparison to the scale of buildings that are surrounding them – the arc openings are more than twice their height – and the statue of lying women that is notably placed in the centre of this piece is acutely larger as well. The interpretation of this estrangement is supported by another line from aforementioned Éluard's poem in which he formulated de Chirico's authorial desire as to 'dépeupler un monde dont je suis absent.'[188] Hence, de Chirico created the world of silence with which no modern man could have connected.

Furthermore, this painting appears almost as if it was frozen in time – one can notice that even train seems to be inert for the reason that the mass of its steam is clustered directly above it, rather than forming a prolonged line which would have suggested machine's movement forward. The passing of time is indicated in the flags whose curvature suggests the blowing of the wind. As a result, this painting generates the uncanny impression from the intermingling sensations of time duration. It provokes the questioning of its elements and the possibility of their cohabitation within one consistent moment. To be more specific, it insinuated the questioning of the existence of two persons and a train – which are the elements that do not appear to be apposite for this landscape because of their size proportions (in case of persons) or of their modern character (in case of the train). The conception of this painting is thus applicable to Benjamin's idea of the timeless (or rather 'timeful') moments, constellations. In *The Arcades Project* (1982) he claimed that 'It is not that what is past casts its light on what is present, or what is present its light on what is past; rather, image is that wherein what has been comes together in a flash with the now to form a constellation. [...] Only dialectical images are genuinely historical – that is, not archaic – images.'[189] Likewise, Ara Merijan is in agreement as she stated that 'Metaphysical cityscapes are not timeless, but rather "untimely"; they are not eternal, but eternally recurring.'[190] Possibly, this idea appealed to de Chirico on account of his Greek descent for the reason that modern Western society was built upon the basis of ancient Greek civilisation. However, his portrayal of ancient Greek setting alongside with modern components indicated the synchronicity of the two eras. His

[187] see Figure 9
[188] 1968: 144
[189] 2015: 463
[190] 2010: 3

compositions did not present any straightforward allusions that explicitly assigned dominant status for one culture whilst the other was repositioned so that its entities would have served solely as symbolic mementos.

On the other hand, de Chirico's paintings are not connected to the past solely on the conceptual level – that is, inclusively through their particular subject matter. In his works, the timelessness/ timefulness can also be detected through another evidence – that is, his technical style. It was characterised as 'neoclassical' due to noticeable quality of reality's resemblance in de Chirico's mimetic representation. With the intention of 'defending' traditional painting techniques, de Chirico published essay titled 'The Return to the Craft' (1919) in *Valori Plastici*. According to Salvatore Vacanti, in doing so he 'linked himself to the inside of a greater phenomenon that involved all of Europe at the end of the First World War: the "return to order."'[191] This term denotes several artistic movements that originated after the First World War and whose intention was to oppose anarchistic avant-garde movements and re-establish figurative painting. The basis of this aspiration lay in the fact that after the unperceivable chaos of 'Great War' they wished for concrete exemplification of the world. Similarly, after First World War, de Chirico produced many texts as an art critic. Benjamin believed that this profession designated 'an intellectual labourer with a clear task: to foster the revolutionary consciousness of the class of which he or she is unambiguously a mernber.'[192] Arguably, de Chirico accomplished this pursuit rather successfully – as Barbara McCloskey noted, 'his long-standing interest in memory and history of the Italian cultural past made him an early exponent of the avant-garde's resurgent interest in classical tradition.'[193] De Chirico's paintings are then to be comprehended as the visualisation of his criticism, since they outlined the space assigned to tradition within the modern times. Namely, they have done so through adaptation of the elements of the past alongside the modern features – and it is thus corresponding with Benjamin's belief that 'criticisrn is to be conceived not as the recovery of some original authorial intention, but as an interpretative intervention in the afterlife of the artwork. Meaning is transformed and reconfigured as the artwork is read and understood in new contexts and historical constellations.'[194]

In addition, de Chirico published 'The Return to the Craft' (1919) which was an explicit critique of Futurists' portrayal of modern essence – as aforesaid, de Chirico's and

[191] 2006: 444
[192] Gilloch, 2002: 11
[193] 2005: 99
[194] Gilloch, 2002: 30

Futurists' conception of modern subject matter seemed to be compatible in certain regards, but de Chirico denounced Futurists' stylistic expression and estimated it to be solely the indication of their artistic impotence. He mainly criticised their aversion from exact copying of the human form and he proposed 'to return to pictorial science following the principles and teaching of our old masters.'[195] He advised them to follow old masters' techniques and principles in order to gain the enigma of *the artist* while he insisted on maintaining the original subject matter – this he achieved via the aforementioned extraordinary sceneries in which he presented familiar components residing in unknown landscapes. Subsequently, de Chirico surmounted the contradictions in his theory: while he adhered to the tradition of Italian painters by practising the mastery of their craftsmen skills, he also remained dissociated from their subject matter due to his unique insight of peculiar juxtapositions. This approach can be summarised by de Chirico's own words which are as follows: 'It is not a question of imitating, remaking or copying. It is a question of finding a path toward a lost paradise, toward a garden of the Hesperides where we can gather other fruits than those already gathered by our great ancient brothers.'[196]

Moreover, de Chirico emphasized the significance of skilfulness in painting with the intention of situating it in the tradition. As he noted, 'Drawing, ignored, neglected and deformed by all modern painters [...] drawing, I say, will return not as a *fashion* as those who talk of artistic events are accustomed to say, but as an inevitable necessity, as a condition *sine qua non* of good creation.'[197] De Chirico accused Futurists of shifting (although only temporarily, he believed) the conventions of a work of art. This understanding have affinities with Benjamin's argument on art's relation to craftsmanship – he asserted that modern art was disconnected from the experience (Benjamin distinguished experience, when comprised in art, as a quality that is analogous to de Chirico's conception of 'spirituality') since 'the hand – so crucial to the Handwerker (artisan – or craftsman) – is made redundant by technological advance.'[198] However, de Chirico did not perceive Futurists to be innovators – quite the opposite, he compared them to a fleeting fancy and connected tradition to a perpetual force awaiting its eternal recurrence. It is possible that his viewpoint was also affected by Nietzsche's philosophy – whom de Chirico cited as one of his main influences – since

[195] 2003: 237
[196] 2006: 476
[197] 2003: 237-238
[198] Leslie, 1998: 7

'modernity, for Nietzsche, came to be 'the eternal recurrence of the ever-same.''[199] De Chirico furthermore strengthened the concept of eternal duration with the connotations of the use of Latin phrases in his essays. There are two reasons with which I support my claim: firstly, Latin is exemplified as the universal Western language of the past; secondly, it can be comprehended as being immortal in a sense – in spite of it being typified as 'dead language,' it is still widely exercised in certain professions of the current times. As a result, Latin can be perceived as an allusion to tradition in suggesting that tradition is likewise never outmoded – and for that reason, it is sensed to be imperishable and inextinguishable.

Furthermore, throughout his writings, de Chirico gave the impression of admiring especially the strong tradition of Italian *Maestros*. However, in 'The Return to the Craft' (1919) he also mentioned the Flemish painters who were able to penalise anyone for 'the negligence' or the use of 'inferior materials.'[200] Although, as shown by Michael Baxandall, insistence on the excellence of paints was also stressed in Italian art industry of the 15th century – patrons who commissioned the works insisted on 'the painter using a good quality colours.'[201] This was the case particularly when patrons requested the most eminent dyes, such as gold, silver and some shades of blue – as a matter of fact, in order to 'avoid being let down about blues, clients specified ultramarine; more prudent clients stipulated a particular grade – ultramarine at one or two or four florins an ounce.'[202] In effect, painters were paid in two instalments: firstly, according to the accurate expenses on the specific colour; secondly, for their craftsmanship. This power-relation between the patron and the painter was gradually modified when 'the conscious consumption of gold and ultramarine became less important in the contracts, its place was filled by references to an equally conspicuous consumption of something else – skill.'[203] To summarise, the financial value of a painting was originally mirrored in its material features, but progressively, due to lessening of this quantifiable approach, painters were empowered to develop their own personas as artists, rather than their command of being mere craftsmen. Nonetheless, de Chirico rejected this historically indebted dualism. He asserted that skills and quality of materials were both indispensable for the creation of a masterpiece. He demanded that 'our painters must be extremely diligent in the perfection of their means: canvas, colours, brushes, oils and varnishes must be of the highest

[199] Frisby, 1985: 14
[200] 2003: 238
[201] 1988: 8
[202] Ibid, 11
[203] Ibid, 15

quality.'[204] He further commented that 'it would be a good thing if painters again took up the habit of making their own canvas and colours'[205] after he expressed his doubts about the commercial products of his time. His opinion was that manufacturers were enabled to exploit the artists due to abundant market demand for Futurists pieces – to be specific, producers adjusted quality expectations accordingly with Futurists' ability to recognise the superiority of their products that – in de Chirico's estimation – was deemed to be rather low.

In addition, in his essay 'Pro Tempera Oratio' (1920) he accused art critics of being incorrect when they claimed that brothers Hubert and Jan van Eyck were using oil paints. Instead, de Chirico suggested that they were using tempera – he linked tempera with the supreme value, and he attested to it by connecting it to the supreme art of the Italian *Maestros*, such as Fra Angelico, Piero della Francesca, Botticelli, Dürer, Holbein and young Raphael.[206] He detected that 'what has misled and still misleads connoisseurs of art, even the most expert of them, is the fact that a varnished tempera, especially if it is oil tempera emulsion, more specifically: a painting executed with any material that can be mixed with water in which the emulsion of oil or resin is involved, is difficult to distinguish from an oil painting, especially when layers of varnish have been given on top of the paint, as occurs with ancient paintings.'[207] Ultimately then, the inclusion of the past in de Chirico's paintings was not bestowed solely on their façade. On the other hand, his insistence on an artwork engaging with the traditions can be perceived, in a sense, as a certain kind of immaterial quality of this artwork – for it is an aspect that cannot be uncovered with the naked eye, providing that even art critics had misinterpreted such a vital feature. This quality can be compared to Benjamin's conception of 'aura' on the account of its equal immaterial status. Benjamin defined aura as an artwork's 'presence in time and space, its unique existence at the place where it happens to be.'[208] It necessitated artwork's original authenticity, and it could have hardly been found in all the countless fliers that Futurists dispersed around cities.

In conclusion, this chapter manifested the scope of influence that modernity held on the creation of studied artists. It was identified as forming factor in artworks of both Futurists and de Chirico. I discussed the impact of 'the material side' of modernity, which was detected in the invented devices, such as trains or other modern means of transportation that introduced

[204] 2003: 238
[205] Ibid
[206] 2006: 476
[207] Ibid, 478
[208] 1999: 214

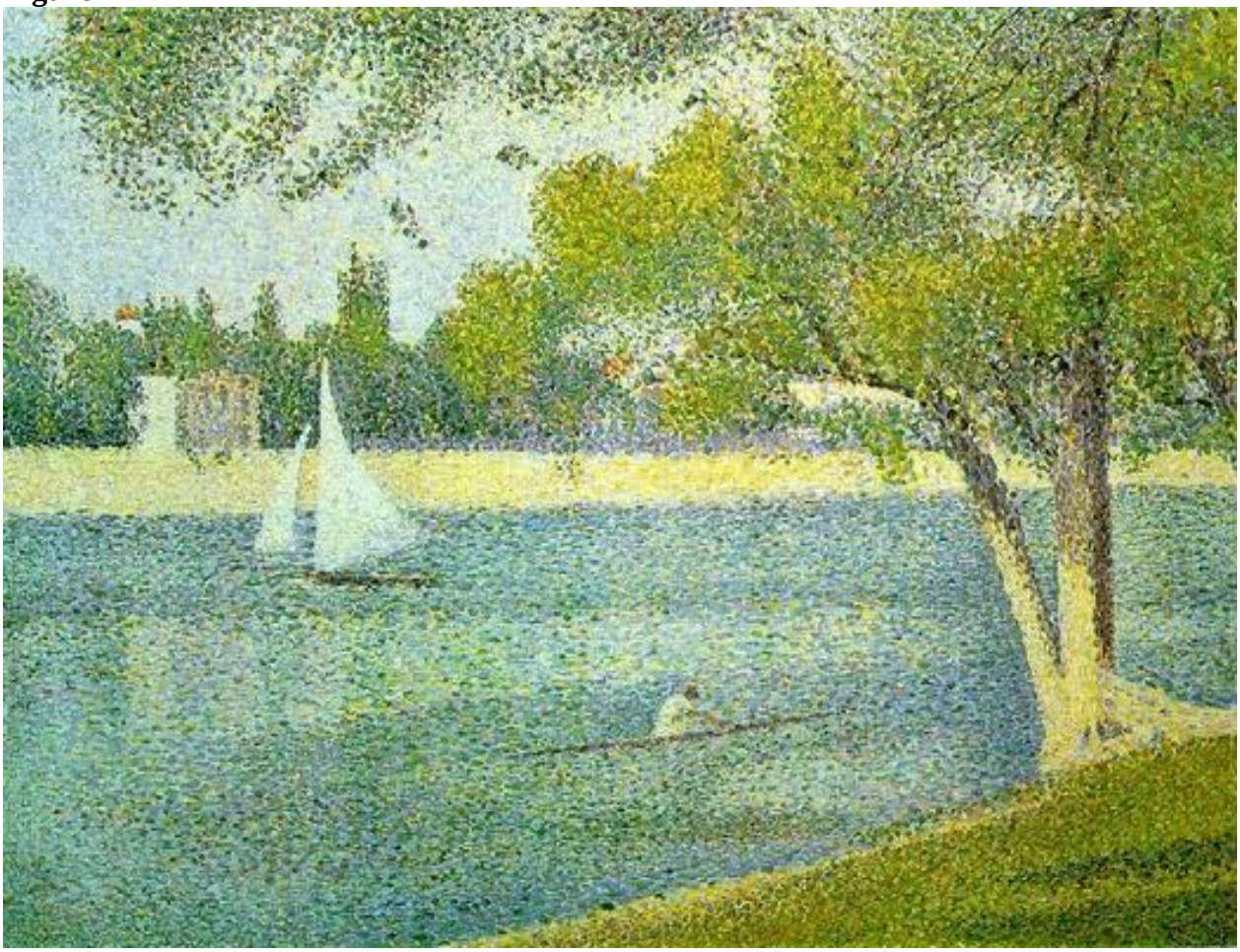
previously unknown speed. These changed the patterns of life and perception of one's surroundings which was principally marked by fragmentation. Both Futurists and de Chirico commented on this phenomenon, and they appeared to be in agreement on that it was a power of great and aggressive force since it was capable of transforming a modern man into primitive brute whose response to it was an equally violent counter attack. Albeit, whereas Futurists regarded this in positive light and labelled it as necessary progress, de Chirico associated it with the isolation and melancholy. Consequently, these two parties of contemporaries employed different strategies in their respective artistic expressions – and it is possible to elucidate the differences in their choice as conditioned by their subjective and emotional retort to novel sensations that invaded the everyday life. While de Chirico searched for the elements of ancient times – perhaps to bring certain kind of order, or better a substantial purpose from the divine authority into his present times – the Futurists were anticipating the future with all its advancement. They believed that one could only attain progress if the past was annihilated – but as my study shown, not even Futurists themselves were certain if a complete rupture with the past was ever possible. On the other hand, de Chirico was convinced that past is always present, in dialectical terms. His portrayal of modern elements in antique settings (that favoured none of the two) demonstrated his believe that even if certain phenomena might have taken on different or 'modern' forms, the essence of the human condition remained unaffected. He estimated that this everlasting human condition defined man as a brute who enhances his status by becoming a skilful craftsman with the ability to depict sublime visions. According to him, Futurists' methodology was stipulated solely by 'the immaterial side' of modernity – that is, the mechanism of the art market as observed in the times of a foundation of capitalist society. He believed that due to mass audience's admiration, the standard of art quality plummeted drastically (in the terms of materials, but in terms of execution of actual painting skills as well) – an opinion he shared with Baudelaire. Futurists refused the critique about their incompetence and lack of skills – contrariwise, they fabricated their image on the claim that their art was too advanced for their own time, but only because the art critics were out-dated in their opinions and thus inadequate to understand it. They endeavoured to abolish the cult of refined artists and propagated the idea of their commonness with the masses – and it seems that, to a certain extent, they were successful in this undertaking within their own milieu.

Chapter Two: List of Figures

Figure 1

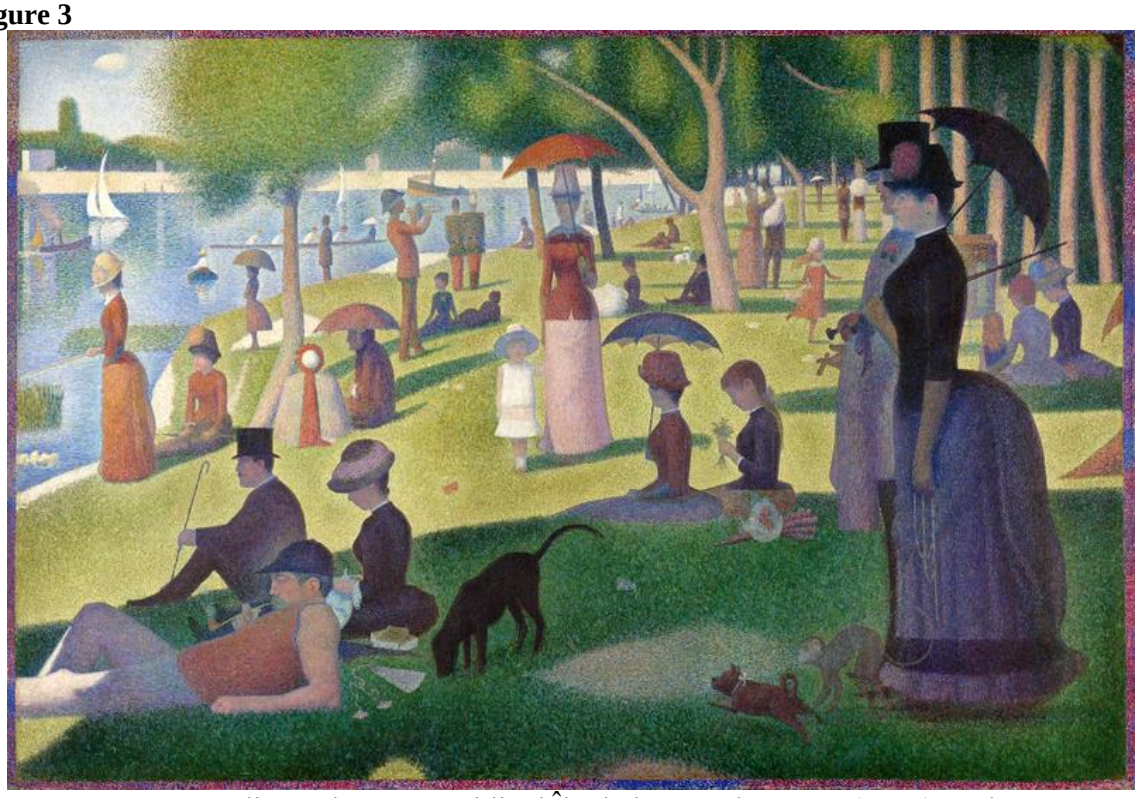
Umberto Boccioni, 'Officine a Porta Romana.' (1908) Web.

Figure 2



Georges Seurat, 'La Seine à la grande Jatte, printemps.' (1888) Web.

Figure 3

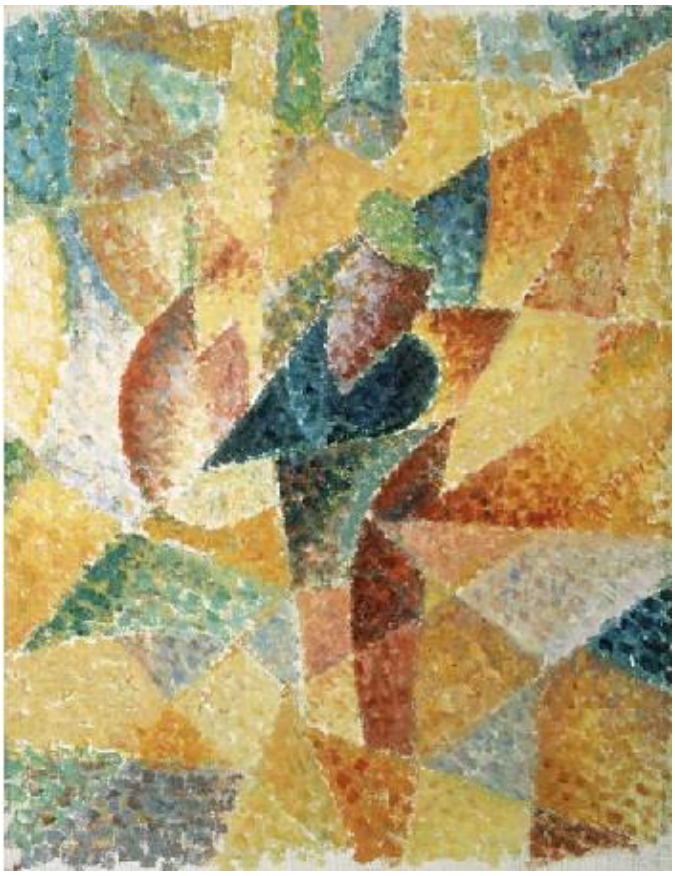


Georges Seurat, ‘Un dimanche après-midi à l'Île de la Grande Jatte.’ (1884) Web.

Figure 4

Édouard Manet, ‘Le Déjeuner sur l'herbe.’ (1862) Web.

Figure 5

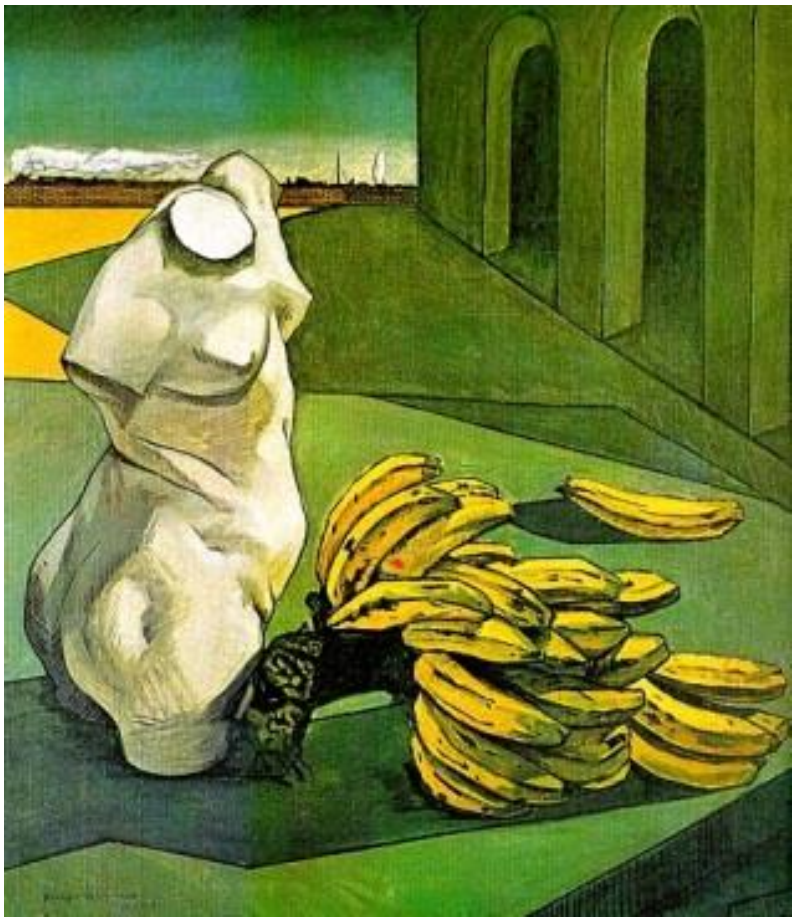


Gino Severini, ‘Forme in espansione.’ (1914) Web.

Figure 6

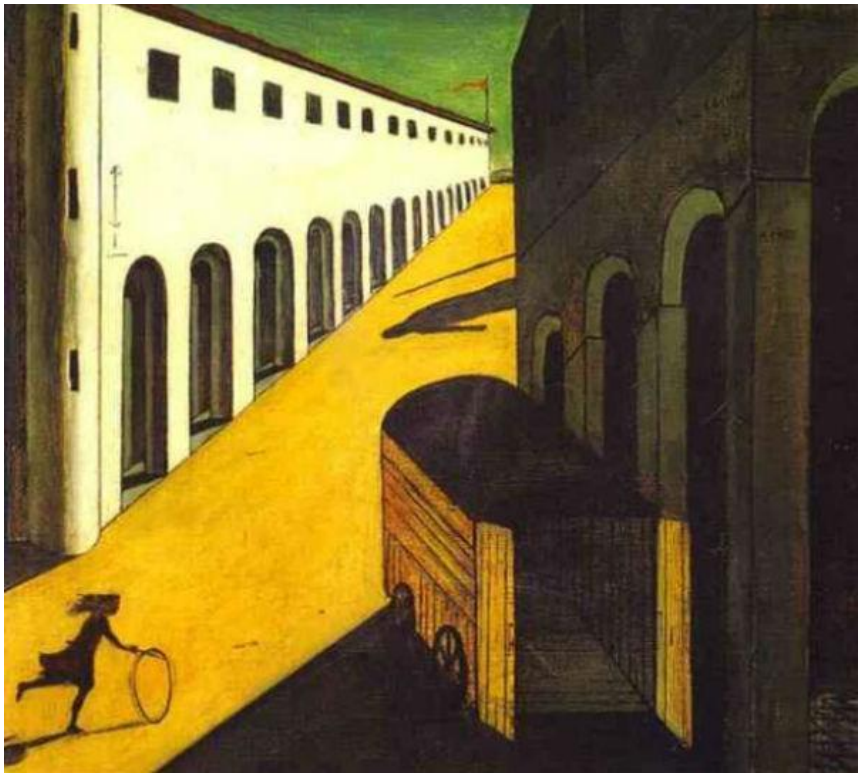
Futurist poster. Web.

Figure 7



Giorgio De Chirico, ‘The Uncertainty of the Poet.’ (1913) Web.

Figure 8



Giorgio De Chirico, ‘Mistero e malinconia di una strada.’ (1914) Web.

Figure 9

Giorgio De Chirico, 'Piazza d'Italia.' (1913) Web.

Chapter Two: Bibliography

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Active Art versus Passive Consumption in Post-war Paris

Jean-Pierre Dormois noted how 'Post-war France […] was poised to take a dive into fully fledged industrialisation and urbanisation.'[209] During this period, it was partly demonstrated by the direct correlation between the decline in French traditional agricultural production and the rise in 'heavy industries.' According to supply and demand, many new factories were built**;** as Hugh Clout suggested, 'the actual industrial floor-space in the capital increased by one-quarter between 1954 and 1966, and it is estimated that an additional 20 000 provincials are employed every in the dynamic industries of Paris every year.'[210] This account also described the changing tissue of the capital owing to the scope of space that was required to be allocated to factories themselves and likewise for the housing of the employees who, as it is apparent from Clout's findings, were often relocated from the rural environments. However, it seems that this relocation was necessitated because numerous jobs were created in factories; in fact, 'during the "thirty glorious years" of the Golden Age, total employment in industry (including construction) increased by a quarter, to reach 8.3 million persons.'[211] Needless to say, this shift in national manufacturing scheme thus impacted great number of lives, mainly those of agriculture workers who moved into urban areas in order to seek an employment in the newly created job openings.

This impact was of vast proportions since the nature of agricultural work differed vastly from the work that was required from factory workers. For that reason, the process of adapting to new working conditions and their strong emphasis on daily life of vast number of population designated 'the final collapse of traditional way of life during the postwar boom.'[212] The transition into these novel working conditions and the changed patterns of labor practice it instigated were largely criticised by many Marxist critics. However, this trend was also noted by contemporary artists and activist groups. In this chapter, I will examine these 'modern' developments and their impact on the creation of art, but likewise on the everyday life of Paris' citizens.

[209]2004: 85
[210]1972: 60
[211]Dormois, 2004: 86
[212]Ibid, 85

Firstly, Benjamin connected the rapid industrialisation to the overall phenomenon of the loss of authentic experience which, according to him, 'has fallen in value'[213] since the beginning of the twentieth century. He characterised experience as the quality which 'older people had always passed on to younger ones. It was handed down in short form to sons and grandsons, with the authority of age.'[214] However, factory vacancies diminished the demand for the circulation of knowledge since they did not require any *prior* knowledge from their employees. Thus, according to Benjamin, the 'unskilled worker is the one most deeply degraded by the drill of the machines. His work has been sealed of experience; practice counts for nothing there.'[215] In other words, workers did not gain any qualitative experience of a trade that they could have forwarded onto the next generations, or share among their peers. Benjamin further argued that this 'tremendous development of technology' did not augment the reserves of human experience, but in fact depletes them. Nothing in the experience of previous generations equips modernity to interpret the social forms brought forth by an unprecedented expansion of the means of production.'[216]

To be more specific on the operational schemes of the factories, Karl Marx captured it in *Capital: Critique of Political Economy* (1867) in following terms: factory labor was considered to be the most efficient in the case when workers were divided and each of them was assigned a monotonous task which he was ordered to repeat for the duration of his shift. This resulted in 'the creation of the detail labourer who performed fractional work in the workshop.'[217] In other words, none of the workers gained any knowledge on how to produce a whole article; they only repeated the same task behind the conveyor belt. This form of organisation further alienated workers for they had no palpable understanding of the production. Consequently, Marx claimed that such a worker 'is thus depressed spiritually and physically to the condition of a machine and from being a man becomes an abstract activity and a stomach.'[218] In other words, the only human trait that was still observable in worker subjected to the aforementioned conditions was his appetite; all human desires seemed to be rebuffed, albeit the one whose fulfilment was essential to the functioning of the body – for this type of worker there was no need for anything supplementary but docile body. Factory

[213]1999: 731
[214]Ibid
[215]1999: 172
[216] Bracken, 2002: 337
[217] Linebaugh, 1993: 225
[218] 2007: 24

worker, according to above-cited theories, was lowered to a mere animal capable of mechanical movements.

Furthermore, in addition to aforementioned effects of the subjugation of 'physical' factories, Marx argued that social establishment of capitalism also isolated workers from their desires. Capitalist regime was noticeable in post-war period France as it was characterized by massive consumerism expanded from America. The propagation of this standard of living was noted by Emily Rosenberg, who mentioned the exhibit 'Le Vrai Visage des U.S.A' (1951) that toured around France – it 'displayed working-class life in the United States by emphasizing how few hours of labor it took to buy consumer goods.'[219] Hence, consumer goods were presented as desire-articles whose securing was within easy reach of every citizen. It is not unanticipated then that France transitioned rather effortlessly into this new state of affairs – as Kirstin Ross commented, 'France's habitants should in a very brief time completely alter their way of life and embrace a set of alien habits and comportments determined by the acquisition of new, modern objects of consumption is seen to be a natural, necessary development.'[220] She attempted to elucidate the fluidity of this phenomenon in the light of current events, and hence she claimed that France was submitted to 'gradual evolution: from a literal hunger for food to a more general appetite for consummation per se.'[221] Her claim is insightful given that France's population suffered from lack of food supplies during World War II, which resulted in strict rationing and, subsequently, famine. The following years promised prosperity, and as there was no longer any social regulation on the spending of wages, it is conceivable that people endeavoured to overcompensate for the war years which were marked by the absence of the luxury items. Furthermore, as Dormois remarked, 'wage payments, direct and indirect, escalated in the postwar period'[222] and so even members of the working class were equipped with certain amount of financial means. However, according to Marx, this was yet another approach that lead towards the strengthening of capitalist system – he believed that 'the raising of wages excites in the worker the capitalist's mania to get rich, which he, however, can only satisfy by the sacrifice of his mind and body. The raising of wages presupposes and entails the accumulation of

[219] 2014: 316
[220] 1996: 72
[221] Ibid
[222] 2004: 91

capital, and thus sets the product of labor against the worker as something ever more alien to him.'[223]

Dormois' comments correspond with Raoul Vaneigem's argument in *Traité de savoir-vivre à l'usage des jeunes générations*. (1967) Vaneigem was one of the Situationist International[224] principal theorists and the aforementioned publication was one of the most famous works of this group, in which he claimed that 'le Welfare State tend à englober la question de la survie dans une problématique de la vie.'[225] His analysis parallels Ross': Vaneigem maintained that the past social organizations did not accounted for the lives of people lacking economic needs and/ or social status with weighty consideration – and so this vast body of population was then let to die in enormous numbers due to famines or widespread diseases. In his present time, this period of uncertainty was succeeded with a period in which survival was relatively guaranteed (and this metaphor was emphasized if the recent end of World War II was taken into consideration) – and since that appeared to be more than there had been previously, it should have instead been regarded as *natural and necessary development* that people should have been grateful for. On the other hand, according to Vaneigem, one was subjected to deception that this survival is all that there was – that one was reduced to be nothing but 'prisonnier du dilemme autoritaire: la survie ou la mort.'[226] He denied the notion of the progress in social organisation when he claimed was that there was no actual living in the present state of survival. It was likewise illustrated in McKenzie Wark's paraphrase of above-mentioned Marxist view in simplified terms – namely, the fact that 'the worker is paid to work in the factory, and pays to spend her free time consuming factory-made products.'[227] In other words, the current establishment did not provide one with freedom, but rather it supplied the pre-produced outline of living that propagated solely the patterns of working and spending. Guy-Ernest Debord, central figure of the SI, was likewise in an agreement – he claimed that this social situation was not feasible for the sustaining of human condition when he noted that

> 'Ce déploiement incessant de la puissance économique sous la forme de la marchandise, qui a transfiguré le travail humain en travail-marchandise, en salariat, aboutit cumulativement à une abondance dans laquelle la question première de la

[223] 2007: 25
[224] from now on I will refer to it in the abbreviated form – as the SI
[225] 1967: 157
[226] 1967: 159
[227] 2011: 23

survie est sans doute résolue, mais d'une manière telle qu'elle doit se retrouver toujours; elle est chaque fois posée de nouveau à un degré supérieur.'[228]

It is possible to exemplify the relevance of these statements by examining an account of daily life in post-war France. Certainly, Georges Perec's *Les Choses: Une histoire des années soixante* (1965) is a novel – in other words, a work of fiction – but it is questionable if it was insinuated to be comprehended as such. That is for the reason that certain indications presented this work to be rather a historical record of a certain era. To be specific, the subtitle is moderately ambiguous in French language: 'histoire' can be translated as a story (which connotes fabricated narrative), but this word can also denote a history, or a chronicle (which are literary genres comprising with historical facts). Moreover, names of the protagonists were only introduced in the second chapter of this book, and they were always contemplated as a couple (no distinct character traits were ascribed to either one of them) – and these facts diminish the possibility that the authorial intention could have been the individualization of the couple. All friends of protagonists' couple appear to be of equal social situations (according to their professions and financial securities) and personal aspirations too – subsequently, it implies that any of other couples could have been surrogated for the protagonists and the story line would have been unchanged. After all, narrator repeatedly referred to illustrated characters by using phrases such as 'Ils étaient donc de leur temps,'[229] or 'Ils vivaient au jour le jour;'[230] therefore suggesting that they act like certain stereotypes.

The aforementioned shared aspirations of all characters in Perec's novel are defined as desires for the accumulation of luxury articles – the ownership of these objects is displayed to be the only predicament that could achieve characters' feelings of happiness and fulfilment, as narrator described it in following terms: 'Ils voulaient jouir de la vie, mais partout autour d'eux, la jouissance se confondait avec la propriété.'[231] In fact, their relationship as a couple is also conditioned by this desire as the love Jérôme and Sylvie have for each other is replaced by love for their common resources that enables the acquisition of new objects. Even though they are not part of the working class – the closest estimation of their 'class' rank within current French society would probably be to label each of them as the figure of the *jeune cadre*[232] – they nonetheless share the issues voiced by Marx. Specifically, they defined their situation in following terms: 'de nos jours et sous nos climats, de plus en plus de gens ne sont

[228] 1984: 38
[229] Ibid, 53
[230] Ibid, 79
[231] Ibid, 73
[232] Ross, 1996: 104

ni riches ni pauvres; ils rêvent de richesse et pourraient s'enrichir: c'est ici que leurs malheurs commencent.'[233] Their financial problem was not the lack of funds per se; it was rather their desire to accumulate more and more property. This was seemingly unattainable, and so it turned into an unceasing obsession with spending and working more hours whilst dreaming about spending more of the accumulated funds.

Furthermore, the nature of the couple's job is removed from the tradition just as the work in the factory is. The type of their job was only developed recently, and it does not require any prior knowledge either – actually, both protagonists decided to end their education prematurely in favour of working. However, even though they perceived working solely as means for funding their material appetite, narrator claimed that 'Jérôme et Sylvie étaient devenus psychosociologues par nécessité, non par choix.'[234] Thus, the protagonists considered the fulfilment of their materialistic craving to be a vital necessity in one's life – and Gardiner provided explanation when he claimed that 'when the economy dominates all social life, the formation of authentic human needs is replaced by manufactured pseudo-needs.'[235] Thirst for consumer articles thus became a pressing need – seemingly of the same importance that hunger – and it is rather ironic that protagonists' lack of knowledge was further demonstrated in the fact that they cannot even cook. Cooking was likewise an essential skill that passed on from one generation to another for centuries. However, modern couples do not seem to have any need for this skill. Jérôme and Sylvie were well equipped with 'efficient food products' that were ready for consumption with a minimum of preparation – as narrator described it, 'tout y est consommable, tout de suite: ils aimaient les pâtés, les macédoines ornées de guirlandes de mayonnaise, les roulés de jambon et les œufs en gelée.'[236] The absence of such an essential skill marked that they were removed from the genuine experience – consumption of ready-made products was the sufficient skill they needed for the literal survival. Furthermore, in the second part of novel there is a perfect allegory, I believe, that illustrated the negligence with which young people disregarded the loss of traditions. Jérôme and Sylvie observed ancient buildings while they travelled in Tunisia. These were illustrated to have almost magical features for they were comprised of 'quatre colonnes hautes de sept mètres, qui ne supportaient plus rien, des maisons effondrées dont le plan restait intact, avec

[233] Perec, 1984: 71
[234] Ibid, 29
[235] 1995: 104
[236] Perec, 1984: 58-59

l'empreinte carrelée de chaque pièce enfoncée dans le sol.'[237] It appears as if they these structures gained their strength miraculously from the soil (the symbol of the ever-the-same) and their own antiquity which could be comprehended as the seemingly eternal continuation. However, those buildings did not arouse couple's interest: rather, they admired the modern house which was luxuriously decorated by English couple.

This model of life characterised by people's indifference to genuine experience sourcing from the attachment to material objects was likewise criticised by the SI. This group originated in 1957, and their aim was 'to achieve "authentic existence" through the establishment of non-commodified social relations, thereby overcoming the alienations and passivities induced by modern consumer capitalism.'[238] As I have already demonstrated it in Vaneigem's and Debord's aforementioned comments, they refused their current social establishment because they believed that 'under modernity, in short, imaginative and creative human activities are transformed into routinized and commodified forms, and the exchange-value of things holds sway over their utility, their use-value.'[239] To recapitulate, they were convinced that capitalism changed the pattern in one's perceptiveness and exchanged his or hers value system with the pattern of sacrificing one's body for working and spending resulting wages on material articles – which caused the loss of genuine life experience. Therefore, they concluded that 'the anachronistic forms of art [are made] unsuitable to the contemporary historical moment [...] New forms of desire had arisen that could not be expressed in the old-fashioned art forms, but that required art to be realised outside its institutions, i.e. in people's everyday lives.'[240] Consequently, they declared their rejection to produce any artworks and to get labelled as an art group.[241] Nonetheless, at least two active artists were part of their group (at least for a certain period) and/ or openly propagated by the other members – and so I would like to examine their work in some more detail.

Firstly, Asger Jorn was one of the founding members of the SI who became internationally acclaimed artist. However, it is disputed if his prestige effected in his expulsion from the group – as Noele noted, 'he decided to leave the SI in the early 60s due to the fact that he was starting to sell his paintings and make a profit, something which did not fit with the direction in which the SI was moving.'[242] The Situationist International believed that

[237] Ibid, 143
[238] Gardiner, 1995: 103
[239] Ibid, 98
[240] Rasmussen, 2004: 381
[241] Erickson, 1992: 45
[242] 2002

in their times ‘l'objet d'art devenait une valeur marchande, par quel biais la fameuse créativité de l'artiste se pliait à des normes de rentabilité.’[243] In other words, ‘L'art, cette économie des moments vécus, a été absorbé par le marché des affaires.’[244] For this reason, it is plausible that Situationists did not wish to have a financially successful artist as a member of their group for it would have discredited the reliability of their doctrines. On the other hand, certain tension is obtained if one is to compare Jorn’s activism with the Situationist International against his art works – which were described by Karen Kurczynski as ‘an avant-garde intervention camouflaged in a market-friendly format.’[245] And it is noticeable why did his art deserve such a depiction – for example, if a person who is not familiarised with Jorn’s writings was presented with his painting titled ‘Phornix Park,’ (1961)[246] it is more than likely that he or she would have categorized the author to be Abstract Expressionist. I made this assumption allowing that this painting is very similar to those of Jackson Pollock’s – it is embodied with seemingly impulsive brush strokes, even though it can be attributed with a certain amount of compositional stylisation after one is to analyse the background panels of dots.

Nonetheless, it is crucial to consider this painting within the context of Jorn’s proclaimed ideology – and it then becomes evident that this painting was most likely presented as an irony. In other words, it demonstrated that even a *bad* painting (for if the creator of this painting does not identify with the conceptual framework of Abstract Expressionism, then for him this piece denotes solely canvas covered in drips of paint) can gain financial success as long as it follows market’s standards – like it was discerned in Kurczynski’s comment. This hypothesis is supported on the basis of Jorn’s defiant outlook towards the artistic practice via numerous iconoclastic assertions – one of these can be actually found in his writing titled ‘Détourned Painting’ (1959) that was produced for the exhibition catalogue for Rive Gauche Gallery (and clearly the choice of this medium only emphasised his implications) – and in it, Jorn proclaimed that ‘Painting is over. / You might as well finish it off.’[247] He also very rarely attended galleries and declined to receive some major art prizes.[248] Furthermore, he often expressed scorn against art critics and academics. For example, ‘in April, while the SI was launching its attack against the art critics assembled in Belgium, Jorn's work was being shown at the Brussels ‘Expo’ as part of ‘50 ans d'art

[243] Vaneigem, 1967: 73
[244] Vaneigem, 1967: 48
[245] 2014: 192
[246] see Figure 1
[247] 1959
[248] Kurczynski, 2014: 191

moderne.''[249] His work can thus be distinguished as the delegate of his criticism in certain manner – for if he created his artwork to be deliberately *bad*, then its success is yet another testimony against the hypocritical pretentiousness and genuine deficiency of art critics. That is the reason why he was one of the signatories of 'Action in Belgium Against the International Assembly of Art Critics.' (1958) This pamphlet claimed that 'Brussels Fair is laughable'[250] and it was redistributed on sign of protest against this assembly in particular and, according to the SI, the outdated approach of the profession of art criticism in general. Debord claimed that members of the SI 'should not simply refuse modern culture; we must seize it in order to negate it'[251] and it appears that Jorn followed his advice by capsizing famous painters.

Another active artist and a founding member of the Situationist International was Giuseppe Pinot-Gallizio. He was the inventor of Industrial Painting[252] and he introduced this technique in 'Manifesto of Industrial Painting: For a unitary applied art.' (1959) After the commentary on the present state of affairs – which he believed lead to an apocalypse – he claimed that 'machine may very well be the appropriate instrument for the creation of an industrial-inflationist art, based on the Anti-Patent.'[253] Albeit, he was optimistic – he believed that the apocalypse will result in the new age of creativity, and that machines will in fact be transposed with the collective genius of people to aid in accomplishing this deed. Additionally, he asserted that the complete automation would have diminished the labor whatsoever and reward people with absolute free time. He contradicted Vaneigem in that it was 'inutile d'espérer d'un travail à la chaîne ne serait-ce qu'une caricature de créativité'[254] – as a matter of fact, Pinot-Gallizio stated that it was essential to demand creativity from the machines. Moreover, the reason for this requisite can be paralleled to Jorn's strategy – Pinot-Gallizio noted that 'Industrial painting is the first attempted success in playing with machines, and the result has been the devaluing of the work of art.'[255] Corresponding to Jorn, Gallizio likewise aspired to penetrate the art market and accommodate it into his 'fraudulent' paintings, which were created by machines. Michèle Bernstein captured – with great deal of irony – few ways in which these works were supposed to improve the system of art market: she argued that with these paintings, there were 'no more problems of size — the canvas is

[249] Home, 1991: 34
[250] The Situationist International, 1959
[251] Debord, 1957
[252] see Figure 2
[253] Pinot-Galizio, 1959
[254] Vaneigem, 1967: 53
[255] Pinot-Galizio, 1959

cut before the eyes of the satisfied customer; no more bad periods — because of its shrewd mixture of chance and mechanics, the inspiration for industrial painting never defaults; no more metaphysical themes — industrial painting won't sustain them; no more doubtful reproductions of eternal masterpieces; no more gala openings.'[256]

Frances Stracey likewise mentioned the night during which Pinot-Gallizio hanged these paintings all over Paris. It was significant for it was 'hanging on the public walls of the street, the everyday spaces of the urban environment, where it was envisaged as a gift of fantastic coverings that could transform the relationship between social space and its inhabitants.'[257] Thus, the artist expected this work of art to be active; not merely another passive painting hanging in the gallery or on some rich collector's wall. He followed Vaneigem's command that one should return to 'la vie quotidienne, non pour la changer, car telle n'est pas leur attribution, mais pour en faire la matière même d'une esthétique nouvelle qui, réfractaire à l'empaquetage, échapperait donc au mécanisme de l'achat et de la vente.'[258] He anticipated that his painting could incite new sensibility towards the attentiveness of one's surrounding and perhaps inspire others to engage with it in more creative manner. With the use of painting-machines and method involving the cover-up of public walls and buildings he proposed an alternative to 'mechanistic civilizations and frigid architecture that ultimately lead to boring leisure.'[259]

The SI also created another street art, which was one of Debord's most notorious 'works': a graffiti plainly stating 'Ne travaillez jamais!' (1963)[260] However, it could not be regarded as artwork for it does not dispose with many common features of conventionally acclaimed work of art in Western tradition. It is not beautiful – there are no ornamentations on either its textual or visual level: firstly, it features simple declarative sentence that even lacks subject; and secondly, it is presented in a rather crude manner. In short, there is no evidence that would indicate the effort to embellish its font in any fashion. Most famous examples of traditional Western art were obliged to be aesthetically pleasing, such as nudes or still life paintings. On the other hand, Debord's work was bestowed with didactic function – and it was a crucial prerequisite for the majority of Western traditional art to be instructive in the morale message; especially in the Middle Ages when the Church predominantly commissioned artworks. Contrariwise, Debord's work was not commissioned – in fact, it instructed its

[256] 1958
[257]Stracey, 2014: 41
[258]Vaneigem, 1967: 116
[259]Chtcheglov, 1953
[260]see Figure 3

audience to refuse any forms of formal orders since he believed that 'dans une société industrielle qui confond travail et productivité, la nécessité de produire a toujours été antagoniste au désir de créer.'[261] The message of this work was thus in strong opposition to the moral ideology of dominant social establishment of Debord's times. By employing the logic of the afore-mentioned statement, Debord's *creation* is not even a production *of work* per se, provided that it can be classified as an act of vandalism. Vandalism is an action that deliberately damages an object and, as a result, additional work is required in order to restore the object in question to its original state. Thus, on the scale of productivity, Debord's creation rested on the negative balance. As Michael Gardiner noted, 'vandalism, petty theft and looting, industrial sabotage, provocative graffiti, squatting in abandoned properties – these and similar actions were interpreted by the S.I. as latently revolutionary, as signs of a liberated consciousness and the collective refusal to accept passively the boredom and stultification induced by consumer capitalism.'[262] In other words, Debord intended to be revolutionary through the refusal to subordinate as a productive figure in the concern of capitalistic economic standards. Essentially, he endeavoured to 'undermine the logic that dictates our allocation of economic activity, of 'acceptable' organised leisure time.'[263] Albeit, to be more specific, Wark further explored this conception when he pointed at the fact that 'leisure time is often called free time, but it is free only in the negative, free from work.'[264] This artwork was then illustrating 'a "new poverty," an impoverishment of the qualitative aspects of human existence. There is no shortage of consumer durables, or the availability of manufactured leisure, but there is a dearth of genuine "free time" (as opposed to "compulsive time"), unrestructured urban space, and non-instrumental action.'[265] But Debord refused to follow these social dictates and to perform any tasks that were perceived to be efficient or productive whatsoever – and in doing so, he 'sought a quite different concept of time, resolutely based on non-work'[266] and for this reason his graffiti 'frees time from its binary form of work time and leisure time.'[267]

It is likewise crucial to take notice of the fact that Debord chose to envoy his message through the medium of graffiti – for the execution of this type of work presupposed the

[261]Vaneigem, 1967: 51
[262]Gardiner, 1995: 107
[263]Spooner, 2014
[264] 2011: 25
[265]Gardiner, 1995: 100
[266]Wark, 2011: 25
[267]Wark, 2011: 25

audience (that is, passer-byes) and the place of its exhibition (that is, a street). It demonstrated Situationists' awareness of the public spaces and also the scope of their impact. It is noteworthy that in Debord's times, Paris' façade experienced radical changes. Following the World War II, many residential buildings in Paris were destroyed due to bombing – as Clout noted, 'at the end of the war almost 133 000 dwellings (located in 51 100 buildings) in the Seine *département* needed to be repaired following German or Allied action.'[268] This led to serious housing crises and as a result, many citizens were forced to live in inhuman conditions. The emerging feeling of public frustration was enhanced on account of ineffective resolutions which were set forth by for government – for example, before constructing residential unit it built 'additional accommodation in which to employ office staff dealing with numerous administrative matters resulting from the devastation and disruption of war.'[269] This shortage of suitable housing, especially for people from working class (who lacked the financial means to either repair or rebuild their war destroyed houses) crystallised into more serious matter that influenced the building patterns of Paris (and mainly its suburbs). To be more specific, 1950s and subsequently 1960s experienced boom in the creation of poor neighbourhoods which were characterised by aesthetically grim tall buildings – one after another – whose primal aim was to accommodate as many people as possible within miniscule units. As Aidan Southall recorded,

> 'after the immense housing effort of the 1950s and 1960s the suburban landscape was dominated by grands ensembles: large, very dense, high-rise housing estates of 20,000-60,000 inhabitants. They were flung up anywhere cheap, vacant land could be found. That meant no infrastructure services or transport, producing very ugly, gloomy non-communities. […] It was an austere gridiron of grey box-like blocks of five to seventeen floors, a clumsy misunderstanding of Le Corbusier, lacking schools, clinics, transport, post offices, sports facilities. It produced nervous breakdowns, delinquency, boredom and prostitution. The monolithic uniformity aroused general complaint.'[270]

It appears then that the major decisive factor for city officials was the model of utilitarian city in the most rudimentary definition – that is, a city in which everyone was sheltered. However, from the above cited account it seems that these officials failed to take into consideration anything beyond the fulfilment of the most basic human needs – for it is apparent that living conditions in poor neighbourhoods produced deterioration of mental health by what is

[268]2004: 129
[269]Ibid, 128
[270]1998: 346

commonly regarded as societal ills (depression, nervous breakdowns, and so forth). As Michael Gardiner noted, 'modernity represents a "flattening out" of the qualitative distinctions found in everyday life and lived space, and their replacement by purely quantitative ones.'[271] This seeming issue of functionalism was noticed by Constant Nieuwenhuys[272] – he demonstrated his disagreement with such urban policy in his lecture 'Demain la poésie logera la vie' (1956) which was presented at a World Congress of Free Artists.[273] He expressed his rejection of functionalism – for he explained that there was no need for such a concept in his present society – when he exclaimed that

> 'L'architecture contemporaine, grâce à la coïncidence heureuse de ces deux conditions d'ordre esthétique et technique, n'a plus aucune raison de rester enfermée dans la doctrine sévère du fonctionnalisme, que lui avaient imposé une imagination périmée d'un côté, et de l'autre une technique toujours primitive, qui forçait l'architecte à se servir de méthodes de décoration pour arriver à l'aspect esthétique qu'il cherchait. [...] Pour la première fois dans l'histoire, l'architecture pourra devenir un véritable art de construction.'[274]

In this paper, Constant attributed architecture with the sublime function of art – he suggested that it could 'servir de la technique comme d'une matière artistique de même valeur que le son, la couleur, la parole le sont pour d'autres arts.'[275] He maintained that buildings should be marked by beauty sourcing from artist's imagination. However, his perception on architecture seemed to change over time – after he collaborated with the SI in 1959, he did not consider it crucial that the architectural objects were solely aesthetically pleasing; rather, he emphasized the potential of city and its buildings in regards to the way these could have affected its citizens. He was in agreement with the SI's conception that in their time 'functionalism (an inevitable expression of technological advance) is attempting to entirely eliminate play.'[276] He believed that houses should go beyond the basic requirement of protecting their habitants from the elements of nature; instead, they should integrate into people's lives as another central element of their environment.

These ideas were explicated in his project called 'New Babylon.' (1959) This project was a plan of another city which would be floating above the already existent urban

[271]1995: 100
[272]from now on, I will refer to him as Constant
[273]Pezolet, 2010: 65
[274]Fondation Constant
[275]Fondation Constant
[276]The Situationist International

metropole. This radical detachment from the primal city (even though New Babylon would still have to be supported by pillars, thus creating certain form of entrance) suggested that the present cities might have been damaged beyond repair – and thus new civilisations must have been built anew. Name of this project is likewise significant for its explicit blasphemy since the city of Babylon was described in the Old Testament as the city destroyed by God after it tried to build a tower tall enough it could reach Him. Via this particular choice of title and the placement of this project (namely, in the skies), Constant proposed that civilization must abandon archaic ideology of Christian morality – that is, in simplified terms, work hard in this life and you shall be rewarded in the next one – and instead he proposed a new model of social organisation in which the fulfilment and satisfaction of one's genuine desires. He believed that 'spatial development must take into account the emotional effects that the experimental city is intended to produce' – which the current cities characterised by the utilitarian vision failed to offer. The new structure would be conditioned to 'the atmospheric effects of rooms, hallways, streets — atmospheres linked to the gestures they contain. Architecture must advance by taking emotionally moving situations, rather than emotionally moving forms, as the material it works with.'[277] From his outlines, one can perceive assemblies of staircases, giant slides and endless mazes which are reminiscent of giant playgrounds. It is apparent from the sketched structures that one could not walk from one point to another without active engagement with different objects that were incorporated into his way – and this active engagement essentially signifies the play. Thus, his architecture was not distinguished as an artwork displayed on pedestal to be admired; rather it served as a mere tool that subjected one directly into the creative action. That conception is consistent with the SI's 'Theses on Cultural Revolution' (1958) in which it was instructed that 'ART CAN CEASE to be a report on sensations and become a direct organization of higher sensations. It is a matter of producing ourselves, and not things that enslave us.'[278]

Albeit, what was one to do in the functionalist city while waiting for the construction of 'New Babylon?' (1959) Debord proposed the answer to that question when he co-created, together with Jorn, an art object which was actually fully capable of change for it produced (or at least stimulated) new situations within this model of city. It was an artist's book *Mémoires*. (1959) According to Johanna Drucker, 'the artist's book has to be understood as a highly mutable form, one which cannot be definitively pinned down by formal characteristics […] The book form is always under investigation by artists who reach out into various

[277]Debord, 1957
[278]Debord, 1958

traditions.'[279] *Mémoires* (1959) was created as the mutual project of Debord and Jorn – one cannot make clear cut distinction in claiming that Debord authored text while Jorn executed illustration for the textual and visual elements are, according to the nature of artist's books, not two separate entities; rather, the boundaries marking where one commences and the other terminates are indiscernible. The substance of this work is then produced as a result of the interplay of textual and visual elements that are co-dependent. It is possible to label this work in the very loose terms as the 'art creation' – since an artist's book is neither a book neither a visual art in its entirety. And even though the SI rejected the idea of art creation, this book was different. Firstly, it was not an 'ideal' one should contemplate, but rather a manual one should utilise in order to achieve genuine experience of self-satisfaction. Secondly, it was a book covered in sandpaper, and so it was of insurgent stance even in its materiality – since it was designed to destroy expensive collection of leather bonded books if placed on the library shelf[280] (those were exactly the art forms that the SI challenged) – nonetheless, its content can be estimated to be equally harmful to any 'bourgeois reader.'

Mémoires (1959) is an artists' book since the generation of its meaning is subjected to the mutual correlation of two different signifiers: words and visual features. However, in the modern literature it is rather difficult to draw the exact defining line between the two, as many artists recognized the visual value of the written text – at the beginning of this conceptual re-appraise, there was Stéphane Mallarmé's pioneering work *Un Coup de Dés Jamais N'Abolira Le Hasard* (1897) in which the innovative organization of the text (as well as the use of blank spaces) suggested an encounter with a work of visual art rather than with a poem; and the formative liberation of the written text was developed even further with the Futurists' ideas on the typography which varied in colour, font and size. For what is more, many modernist writers likewise undermined the previously accepted idea that words are the straightforward conveyors of meaning. To be precise, words' reliability in the process of transmitting the message to the receiver in its authentic form (that is, exactly identical to how it appeared in the speaker's consciousness) was doubted; even if compared to the communicational qualities of abstract art, for example. Debord, who provided *Mémoires* (1959) with the textual substance, was also one of the language sceptics. He believed that language was adopted and transformed in order to support the current establishment of the society which was ruled by the spectacle – to be more exact, according to Debord, language was subordinated to 'sa

[279] 1995: 11
[280]Greil, 2002: 163

recomposition artificielle dans le spectacle marchand, la representation illusoire du non-vécu.'[281]

For these reasons, if one is to examine the text from the first part of the book titled as 'Juin 1952,' it is rather surprising that majority of the words are deliberately presented in typeface that is similar to the one used in the news articles – surprising for the reason that Debord claimed that 'sous toutes ses formes particulières, information ou propagande, publicité ou consommation directe de divertissements, le spectacle constitue le modèle présent de la vie socialement dominante.'[282] Is this some method of camouflage then; was Debord mimicking the layout of one of the spectacle's agent? Nevertheless, the use of vocabulary does not suggest that this text is an article – on the first sight, it gives the impression of being a story. Even though, technically, the specific arrangement of artists' books does not allow its readers to follow the Western tradition of reading – from left to right and from up to the bottom – it is still possible to estimate the opening line which is at the top and in the middle. This placement is indicative of the title – and it goes as follows: 'Me souvenir de toi? Oui, je veux.' This sentence leaves the readers in expectation of a story from the past, as recalled by the narrator's memory, and perhaps this is precisely what *Mémoires* (1959) represented: the opening line is followed by description of the scene ('Des lumières, des ombres, des figures') that could possibly ground this story in the space; afterwards there is a specification of the time ('Le soir') and introduction of the protagonist whose name occurs throughout this part of the book ('Barbara'); and after that the action carried by a character is illustrated as well ('en observa des franges de silence').

However, even though all these elements are present, it is evident that other important aspects of the story-telling are missing: there are no words connecting these sentences (or, rather phrases: although the punctuation marks are absent and so the termination of the sentences remains unknown, the first three grouping of words begin with capital letter, while the fourth one does not – this fact predisposes it to have beginning elsewhere). Thus, it is problematic to attribute that the textual elements formed the traditional narratorial story, yet there are some indications of linear progress: for example, there are lines stating 'j'avais trouvé les seins de Barbara' and few pages later one can find what could be the logical development of this action, stating that 'Barbara déchire son corsage; elle a pas des soutien-gorge.' Furthermore, it can be alleged that these sentences are nonetheless connected to each

[281]1996: 113
[282]Ibid: 11

other via different, yet immediate, means – the visual ones.[283] On the first page, several orange lines are drawn whose both starting and finishing points are located at the words alliances. The same trend can be identified in the following pages as well. On the other hand, it is also notable that the pattern of colour is altered on the few last pages of first part, and I believe that it is not a coincidence that it is exactly where the use of collages of news articles is initiated.[284] Compared to aforementioned 'narratorial words' that are on full display, uninterrupted by any visual obstructions, the cut-outs of the articles are hardly readable: they are deconstructed into smaller pieces, which are situated in such a way that some parts cover up the others. Furthermore, with these words, the outline of visual accompaniment appears to be established according to different kind of logic: paint does not connect the fragments, it enters them; leaving the smudges of colour intruding into the text. This is best illustrated at the Figure 5, where the colour is smeared all throughout the articles; however, there is also a mark at the bottom of the page, from which few lines lead up to one word – 'Barbara'– and they do not interfere with it. It is possible to find the explanation for these two manners of design in Debord's *La société du spectacle* (1967) – in an already cited reference which I would like to quote once more in a longer passage:

> 'On ne peut opposer abstraitement le spectacle et l'activité sociale effective; ce dédoublement est lui-même dédoublé. Le spectacle qui inverse le réel est effectivement produit. En même temps la réalité vécue est matériellement envahie par la contemplation du spectacle, et reprend en elle-même l'ordre spectaculaire en lui donnant une adhésion positive. La réalité objective est présente des deux côtés.'[285]

According to this reading, it can be clarified why the 'narratorial words' are of the same font that the newspaper articles are: reality and spectacle are almost undistinguishable in the appearances. Spectacle is, in fact, part of the reality, and also the force that alters it – and that is the reason why it is conditioned to appear as 'normal.' However, Debord's text is capable of pointing out that the communication from the newspapers contributes to the alienated society by propagating 'Les images qui se sont détachées de chaque aspect de la vie fusionnent dans un cours commun, où l'unité de cette vie ne peut plus être rétablie. La réalité considérée partiellement se déploie dans sa propre unité générale en tant que pseudo-monde à part, objet de la seule contemplation.'[286] It is possible then that the newspaper collages

[283] see Figure 4
[284] see Figure 5
[285] 1996: 12
[286] Ibid, 10

express this fragmentation, and the use of paint calls attention to the dissimilarity of one's experience.

On the other hand, the very last double page negates repetition, as the paint is all over what seems to be 'narratorial words.'[287] It also features the only figurative image of the first part that is most probably capturing the projection of Debord's film *Hurlements en faveur de Sade* (1952) – indications are the readable part of the title ('HURLEMENTS EN FAVEUR DE') on top of one page and text stating 'Ecran noir/ Guy-Ernest Debord.'[288] Christian Nolle defined the film as 'a movie with no images. It consisted of a black and white flickering projection of nothing. The white parts had a voice over; the black parts were left in silence.'[289] Therefore, the possible explanation is that the colour disturbs the text for it is signifying the medium of film that is in service of the spectacle; however, the words are not disrupted in the same way that it is seen with the news articles, because they are not part of the spectacle, but its negation expressed via the anti-cinematic affinity of Debord's film.

Furthermore, I will examine why are the 'narratorial words' shown to be differentiated from the words from newspaper articles. As mentioned earlier, these words from newspaper articles capture the language of the spectacle and thus they could have only portrayed disrupted fabrications; it then implies that 'the narratorial words' are their opposite – that is, words denoting the genuine experience of life. Hence, I would like to argue that these are demonstrating an account of *dérive* since it is an activity that is building desirable situations within everyday life's environment. Debord defined *dérive* as 'a technique of rapid passage through varied ambiances. *Dérives* involve playful-constructive behaviour […] and are thus quite different from the classic notions of journey or stroll.'[290] In fact, if one is to return to close reading of the text from *Mémoires*, it is noticeable that some of the text implies the activity of walking as well: for example, reader is informed that 'Barbara marche à l'avant' followed by a question 'A quelle distance sommes-nous;' successively, word 'FIN' is printed in bold letters – and it is plausible that this word is indicating the end of the journey for on the successive pages 'narratorial words' are replaced with the collages of news articles. It is plausible then to conclude that *Mémoires* (1959) is mediating the experience of *dérive*, and

[287] see Figure 6
[288] see Figure 6
[289] 2002
[290] 1956

that is also elucidating the discontinuity of the text as it is based on: 'conditioning an ambiance, or a series of clashing ambiances, on the scale of the constructed situation.'[291]

This piece is immediately reminiscent of another Debord's work, titled 'The Naked City.' (1957)[292] It is a decomposed map that features only selected parts of Paris – it depicted certain assemblages of buildings with the blankness of a page surrounding them. However, these islands of illustrations are nonetheless connected; or, to be more specific, the connection is at least proposed via the direction of red arrows that pierce the blank spaces. Thus, its pattern is similar to the one in *Mémoires* (1959) is observable in this work: although, in the case of 'The Naked City.' (1957) words are converted into visual elements, that is, sketches of buildings. Both of these works feature black outlines on blank spaces with imaginary trajectories of bright colours which are suggestive of movements. The map of 'The Naked City.' (1957) is essentially the projection of space, but the arrows assigned it with of certain dynamics. Consequently, this piece presented a map that was not to be looked at, but to be used – since the arrows explicitly urge one to advance in specific direction. Likewise, their bright colour might signify the creativity as driving force that is penetrating subject matters from everyday life which are exposed in black and white. As Thomas McDonough stated, this map 'is predicated on a model of moving, on 'spatializing actions,' known to the Situationist as *dérive*; rather than presenting the city from a totalizing point of view, it organizes movements metaphorically around psychogeographic hubs.'[293] Therefore, the blank spaces in both works might not only be the interruptions in visual space of a page, it is possible that they also indicated the discontinuity of time that was required for physical transport to other locations – which would explain the already shown instances in which the linear progress of a text could be spotted. On the other hand, according to McDonough, in this work, 'the violence of its fragmentation suggesting the real violence involved in constructing the city of the Plan.'[294] I have already discussed the disapproval from the SI over the functionalist architecture employed in the post-war period, and the inhuman living conditions to which Parisian citizens, especially those coming from working-class background, were exposed. Hence, 'Debord's map images a fragmented city that is both the result of multiple restructurings of a capitalist society and the very form of a radical critique of this society.'[295]

[291]Debord, 1957
[292]see Figure 7
[293]McDonough, 1994: 64
[294]Ibid, 65
[295]Ibid, 68

In conclusion, the SI rejected conventional art forms because they considered them outdated. They believed that the contemporary organisation of social life was based upon passive model of consumption. Perec's novel portrays work as an indispensable element of everyone's life on account of augmented significance of the capital within 1960s society. This was manifested in the fact that individual's motivation for obtaining an employment was powered by the desire for the accumulation of funds. Workers' experience was then governed by the automation – as it was apparent in the factories, or in jobs that were detached from the real experience and required as much skills and cognitive action as the factory work did. Social system further directed people towards the patterns of working and spending via different media – most notably, the press and advertising industries. It lead towards the annihilation of leisure time – that is, a positive leisure time. The actual leisure time – that could have been spent in the attempt to generate one's or self-satisfaction – was instead utilised for the fulfilment of a pseudo-needs fabricated by the social system, such as spending or, in other words, consumption of commodity articles. It was believed by the SI that the art market was likewise subordinated to this model of life and it resulted in producing solely empty commodity articles as well. Consequently, the SI decided to refuse the label of 'an art group' and the creation of artworks in general. However, at least two of its members and/ or figures openly supported by the SI members – Jorn and Pinot-Gallizio – did produce art. But at the close examination one is able to realise the factual purpose of these artworks – which could be defined as an attempt to devaluate and putrefy this particular model of art market via the installation of 'internal detrimental agents' – Jorn's and Pinot-Gallizio's artworks. The rest of the group focused their efforts on creation of 'situations.' Those were necessary to initiate citizens' action towards genuine moments of life. In order to accomplish that, the SI employed their environment. Post-war reconstruction of Paris was characterised by 'functionalism' that was a concept in opposition to the SI's ideas. Their goal was to accomplish playful and meaningful exercise which would be detached from social patterns of responsibility and which would accomplish one's personal gratification. For this purpose, they performed experiments in psychogeography and unitary urbanism. For the latter, Constant's project of a model of ideal futurist city was developed. This city would be detached from the urban hubs in physical (as it would be floating above the cities) and structural **terms**. Its architecture's sole function would be to provoke playful interaction from its citizens. Debord's schemes focused on the actual cities and their sites. His works acted as a critique of the current spatial organisation and its impact on the relationship-forming in everyday moments; but they also proposed the ways in which one can engage with one's surrounding in

meaningful and active way. Essentially, even though the SI refused to incorporate their works into the contemporary art of their times, Debord's and Constant's efforts can be illustrated as a certain continuation of what was artworks' traditional undertaking – that is, the mediation of meaningful experience.

Chapter Three: List of Figures

Figure 1

Asger Jorn, ‘Phornix Park.’ (1961) Web.

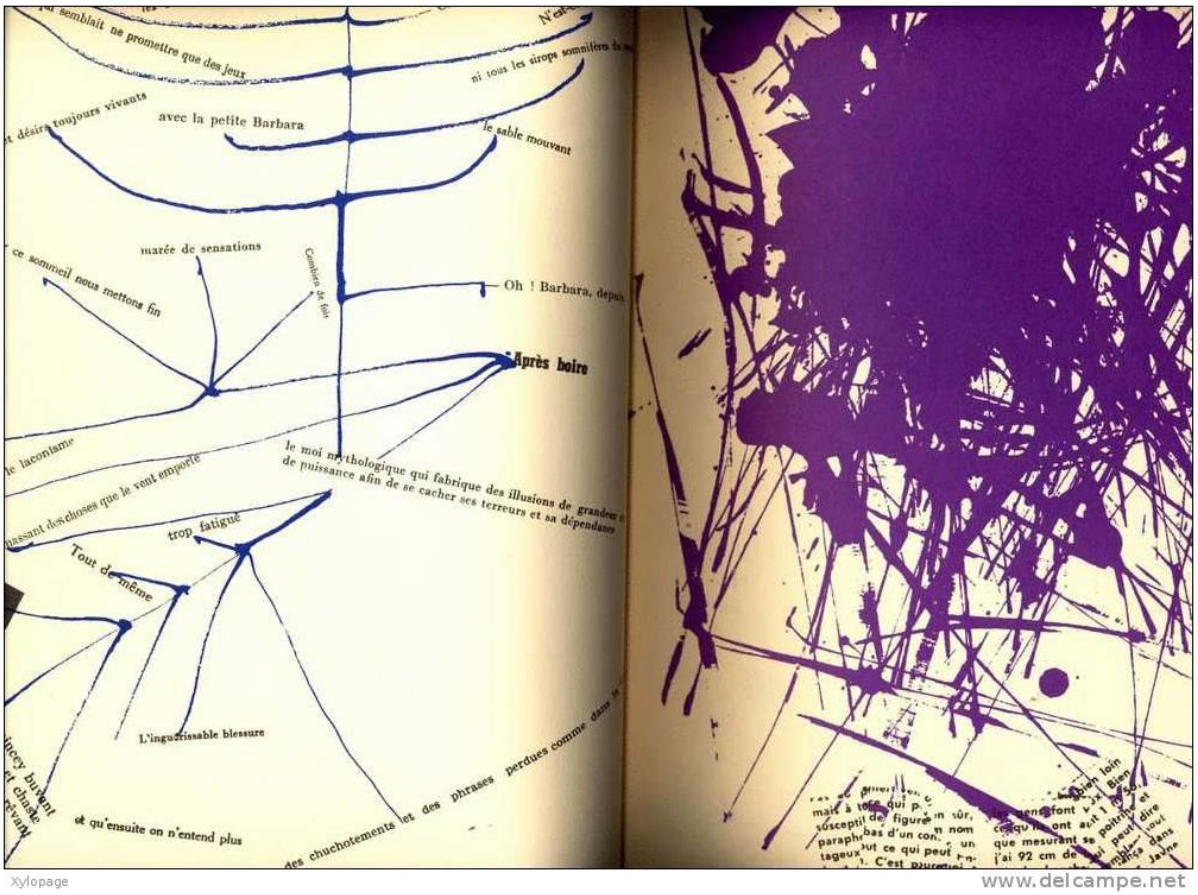
Figure 2

Giuseppe Pinot Gallizio, ‘Rotolo de pittura industriale.’ (1959) Web.

Figure 3

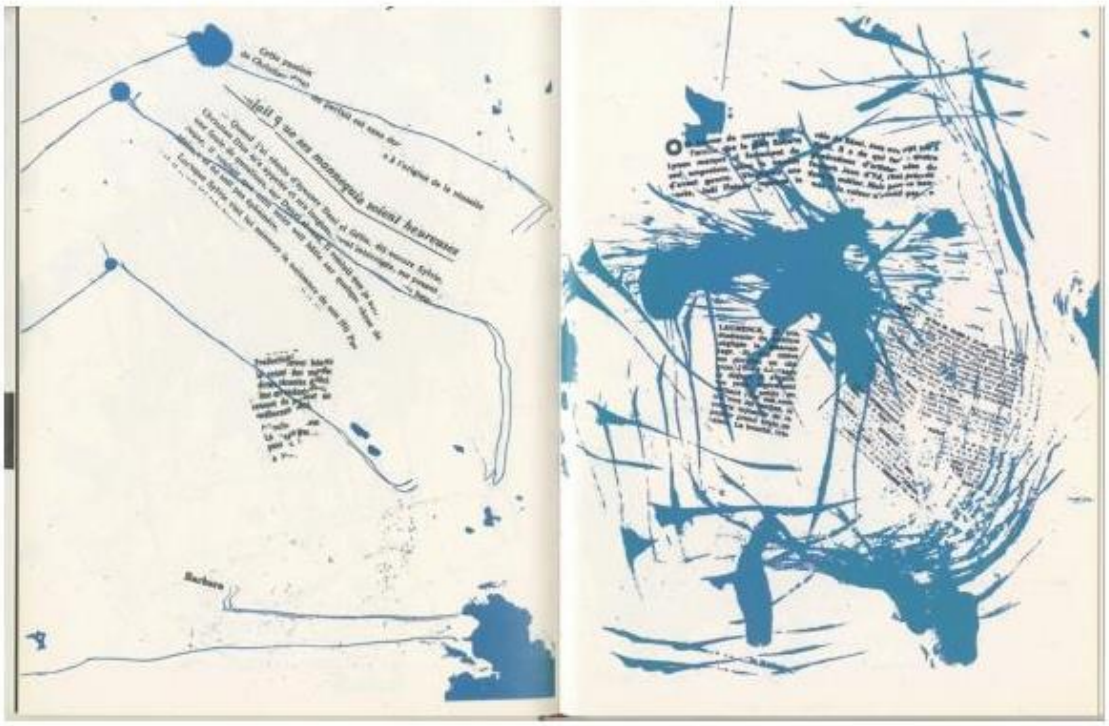
Guy Ernest Debord, ‘Ne travaillez jamais!’ (1963) Web.

Figure 4



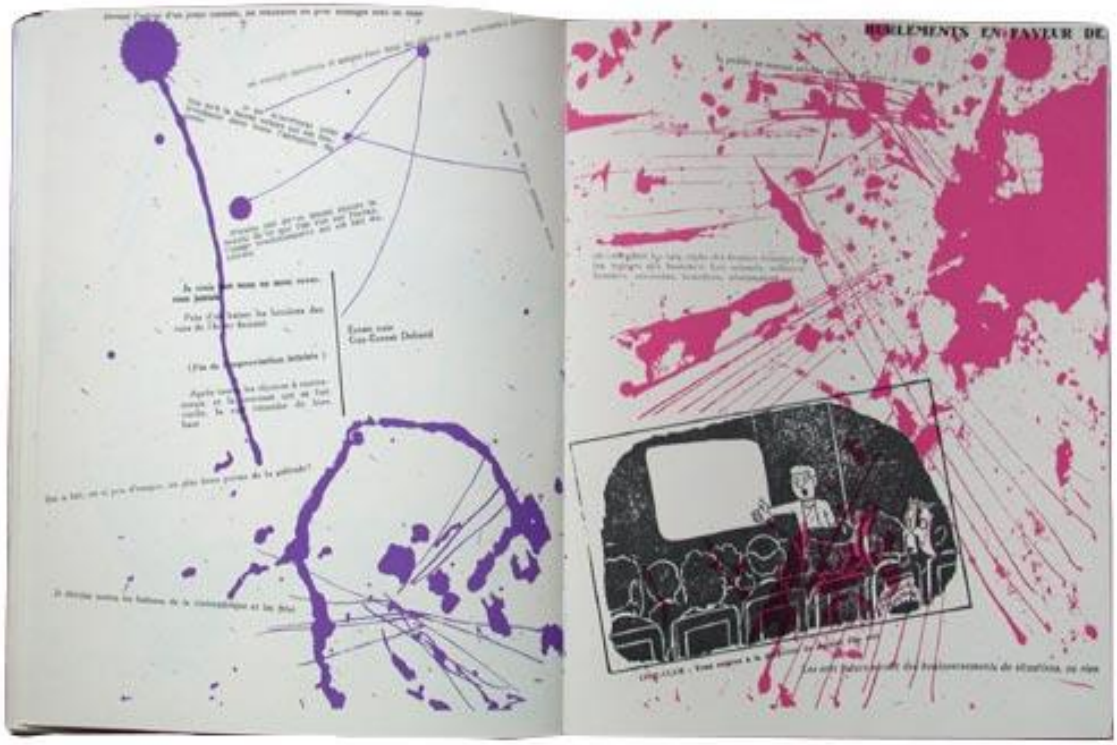
Guy Ernest Debord and Asger Jorn, *Mémoires*. (1959) Web.

Figure 5



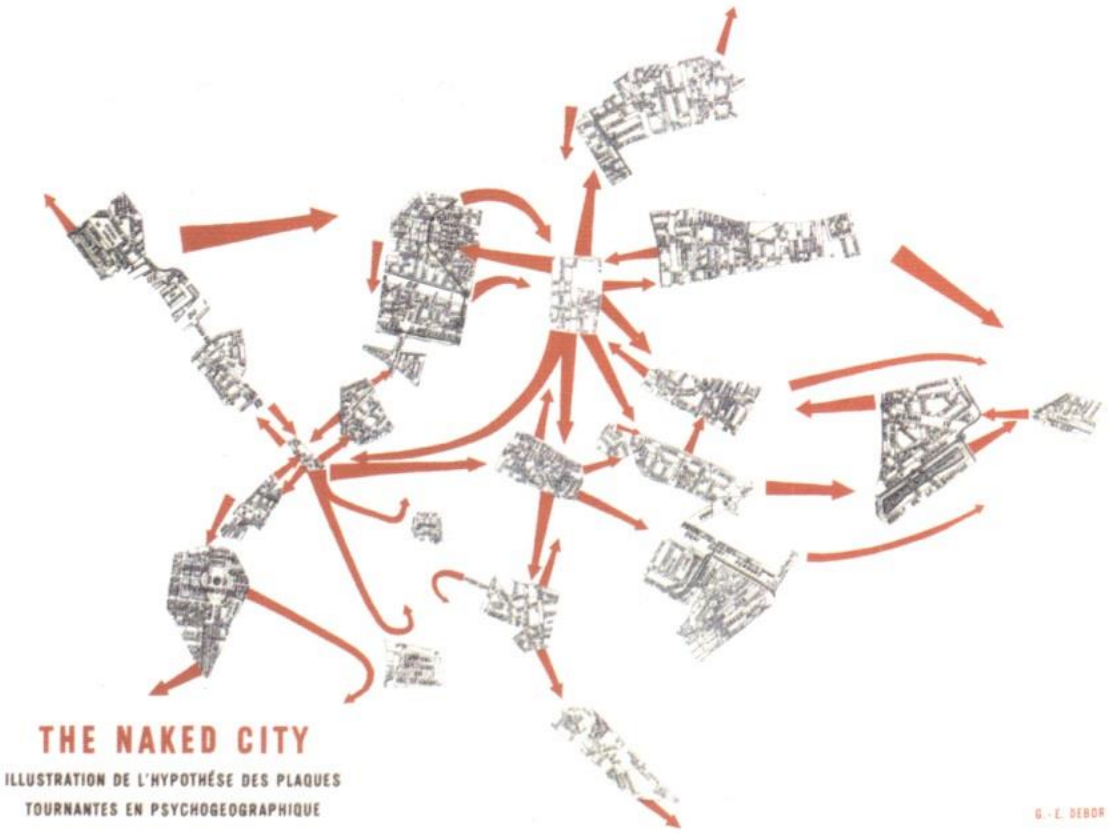
Guy Ernest Debord and Asger Jorn, *Mémoires*. (1959) Web.

Figure 6



Guy Ernest Debord and Asger Jorn, *Mémoires*. (1959) Web.

Figure 7



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The Battle over Images that Rule the Streets

In this chapter, I would like to focus on Gérard Fromanger and also mention Raymond Hains and Jacques Villeglé. They were all contemporaries of the SI but they never joined their group, even though they shared the central points of the SI ideology. Namely, they explicitly criticised the culture of consumerism and they concentrated on the role of street and urban environment in their works. However, in opposition to the SI, these artists were determined to produce artworks and influence the course of society's development through the means of employing their criticism via their artworks. I would also like to examine the connotations of the specific materials they employed in their art production. For Fromanger, the 'building block' upon which he created his pieces was the image – in most cases, it was the photograph. This was notable for he lived in a period when images were proliferating everywhere – one could spot them in newspapers, on public sites or the walls of streets in the form of advertisement, in cinemas. They propagated the directive for consumption everywhere – they illustrated the newest cars for 'him' or kitchen equipment for 'her.'[296] Fromanger, however, perceived images to act like tabula rasa when he endowed them with his own experience and skills. His methodology consisted of choosing a photograph, projecting it on to his canvas, and then copying and painting its contours. He allowed a referentially empty image to enter his studio and once it interfered with canvas Fromanger transformed it into art. I am going to argue that, like de Chirico and Baudelaire, Fromanger did create art that was timeless, yet, at the same time, he adapted it for his contemporary times. I will demonstrate the connection with the past and tradition as it could be discerned in his paintings: particularly via the exploration of subject matters he selected; and also via technique that was, once again, traditional in its essence even though it was enhanced with the use of technology. Fromanger's focus certainly opened up discussion on the topic of artists' genius of original thought and on the issue of plagiarism; but it also posed the question of sublime subject matter and the use of finest materials in order to depict such a magnificent sight with the greatest honour. The use of particular materials is even more problematic in the works of Hains and Villeglé for their practice consisted of tearing down already damaged posters and gluing them into canvas without any further stylisation. All three of these artists insisted on engaging with materials which were considered to be of 'inferior' quality in the consideration of High Art. I am going to argue that this deliberate choice was subject to their most

[296] Ross, 1996: 24

immediate surroundings and social situations – and it was an extremely effective method in regards to critique of their contemporary culture and their undertaking of mediating this critique to the broad body of their audience.

I.

I would like to start my discussion on whether Fromanger created original art or only worthless copies with the study of 'La mort de Caius Gracchus.' (1975)[297] In it, one can notice a miniature copy of an original painting in the background. However, it is reproduced in black and white, while the figures are duplicated and repainted in the main body of Fromanger's painting. These characters are simplified to their sole outlines with no detail. On the other hand, they are also coloured, and there is even indication of reading of these colours on the right top corner. This juxtaposition is crucial – the original painting is thus presented as an article of the past and the lack of colour likely signifies washing off the colours with the passage of time – and that is contrasted with the dynamism of coloured figures in the main body of painting, which are set against black background – or negative space of a painting – which is accordingly creating even more of a vibrant conflict. Moreover, it is crucial to note that the background with nature is replaced by this black space in most of the painting, but the left corner displays a sketch of what appears to be tall blocks of a building. Consequently, this painting is reproduced in a way that brings it back to life with its dynamic colours and seemingly up to date urban scenery. What is important though, is that the characters are not adapted to modern life in the same manner – Fromanger left them with helmets and swords that are an unequivocal indication of the Roman period. Owing to this fact, Fromanger is implying that the characters of revolutionaries are relevant for any time period – it is impossible to outdate their nature and dedication by simply dislocating them into space of urban control. This painting is challenging 'the apparent loss from daily life of the gestural systems of a revolutionary will,'[298] and due to its reference to the past it is staging it as an eternal quality of a citizenship.

Fromanger's artistic process is in fact comparable to the practice of François Topino-Lebrun; the author of original painting depicted in the left top corner.[299] He was 18th century painter and he also revisited the past in order to apply its model to the establishment of his current times. The main character of his painting is Gaius Gracchus, a Roman politician living

[297] see Figure 1
[298] Rifkin, 1999: 32
[299] see Figure 2

in the 2nd century BC – and the legend of his personage was, according to James Henry Rubin, promoted in the 18th century due to a success of 'a play by Marie-Joseph Chenier, called Caius Gracchus.'[300] He further noted that 'the play had as its centre of interest the opposition between the principles of liberty and equality and those of aristocratic privilege.'[301] Thus, the following struggle of classes was portrayed to be eternal, or at least eternally returning – for it seems to be of equal relevance for a Roman citizen of 2nd century BC and a French citizen of the 18th century. But since the social resistance could be discerned, it is also the conception of 'revolutionary consciousness' that could be found in these images. Benjamin compared this phenomenon to the stars, and he explained its reoccurrence through the model of constellation – he believed that it 'links past events among themselves, or else links past to present; its formation stimulates a flash of recognition, a quantum leap in historical understanding. For example, the French revolutions of 1789, 1830 and 1848 and the Paris Commune of 1870 would all be placed in a constellar relation, as events separated in time but linked by a common insurrectionary consciousness.'[302] Fromanger's reproduction enhanced this reference, for it kept the image in circulation and made the quest for resistance relevant for the twentieth century. The topic of memory and remembrance is crucial in this case, for according to Benjamin 'if one asks with whom the adherents of historicism actually empathize. The answer is inevitable: with the victor.'[303] However, the role of Fromanger's art is to illustrate the alternative history of the struggle – the past and present one. This juxtaposition is crucial for 'the relationship of the elements of the past to the present is one that is actualized dialectically.'[304]

Fromanger seized the mythical past and reassessed it, using it as a pillar 'to be discovered and working back, step by step, as on an assembly line, to the point at which it is necessary to start in order to reach the desired object'[305] – which he did indeed reach – in the aforementioned painting, it is distinctive via the use of colouring and juxtaposed settings. Furthermore, as Gilles Deleuze argued, 'resemblance must not be understood as an external correspondence. It proceeds less from one thing to another than from a thing to an Idea, since it is the Idea that comprises the relations and proportions that constitute internal essence.'[306]

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[300] 1976: 552
[301] Ibid, 553
[302] Rollason, 2002: 283
[303] 1999: 248
[304] Friesen, 2013
[305] McLuhan, 1994: 62
[306] 1983: 48

Correspondingly, it is essential that the spirit of revolutionary thought was captured – it is not sine qua non that the technical style of Topino-Lebrun's original painting was not imitated perfectly. These connotations transform the evaluation of the painting to be solely work of plagiarism, or a falsification – on the contrary, Fromanger's work is perceived to honour the original, and this 'new painting takes its place enthusiastically in the circulation of images which it does its own part to drive on.'[307]

Historically, within his own period, this painting likewise distinguishes itself from two currently most prominent movements – from Abstract Expressionism as a result of its perceivable figuration, and from Pop Art due to the fact that his 'work deploys both irony and politically-inspired humility nonetheless capable of maintaining a critical distance.'[308] This can be likewise an indication of Fromanger's resistance to the Americanization of France which was especially notable in the post-war years. As I have discussed in the previous chapter, the France of those times was characterised by the immense rise of private spending of wages on commodity articles. But Fromanger refused the portrayal of consumer products based on literal copying – instead he decided to depict them with overtly critical stance. Arguably, this choice removed his own works from the commodity market – as it did not allow for these work to be consumed passively, rather they required an active participation from their viewers. The aforementioned painting was not simply a duplicate – it was an exploration of the subject matter and process of taking it further in its relevance, while referencing the past and suggesting it in the future – it enabled the 'infinite transition'[309] in order to 'ensure the transit of an image.'[310] In other words, Foucault claimed that Fromanger's paintings organised 'an event that transmits and magnifies the other, which combines with it and gives rise, for all those who come to look at it, and for every particular gaze that comes to rest on it, to an infinite series of new passages. To create […], not the fake identity of the old photo-painting, but the source of a myriad surging images;'[311] even though in this case the model for the painting was not the photograph but another painting, the aforementioned statement is applicable to the overall functioning of the 'genuine original of the copy' artwork.

It is noteworthy that Fromanger's subject matter was most often taken from photographs. Photographs represent the situations within a particular moments' snapshots

[307] Foucault, 1999: 91
[308] Rifkin, 1999: 18
[309] Foucault, 1999: 102
[310] Ibid, 95
[311] Ibid, 93

which were then repainted by Fromanger. Subsequently, one can pose the question: is it ever possible to capture this 'present moment' and make it immobile? As formulated by Tim Dant, 'what photographs do is to bring the past into the present, confronting us with the passage of time and the stillness of that which has gone.'[312] Therefore, the reason Fromanger chose his typical method of painting over photographs was to direct one's attention to the passivity of the past, but essentially also to its implications that can still be active, as the 'minute historical "phenomena" are said to have the potential to be "redeemed."'[313] For example, one can examine another painting from the same series titled 'La Vie et la mort du people.' (1975)[314] In this painting, the characters were realised in an identical depiction to that of the above-mentioned painting – they were reduced to outlines filled with colours and/ or geometrical patterns. Hence, one can argue that this painting is a certain continuation of 'La mort de Caius Gracchus' (1975) attempting to convey the same message. However, the leader who was the direct source of action in the former painting was reduced to trailing the massed crowds in the latter. What in particular is striking about this piece is that it also portrayed one person with her full features depicted – there is a girl recognisable on the posters. Although she is not exactly black and white, she was painted in dark and light blue with white tints – and this choice of alternation in cold colours results in a very static imprint which appears to be freezing her in time. Consequently, the portrayal of this girl insinuates 'degraded copies, the sensationalist reduction of vitality to mere figuration.'[315] Her picture was reproduced and posted on the walls of the street, together with other placards which were assumed to be executing the same role – namely, advertising of various products or services. One can observe these placards distinctively cut into black background, only one of them is partially covered with the poster featuring girl model. The biggest placard has a text stating 'Restaurant: Ouvert Nuit et Jour' – inviting people to come in at any time. These placards, on account of their shape and placement, are reminiscent of placards carrying the names of the streets that one can come across in many large cities. But the placards on Fromanger's painting do not indicate directions for various spaces within the city; instead, they provide guidance for the fulfilment of one's consumer desires. However, the level of this guidance is also questionable for instead having one of their sides shaped in the sharp point of an arrow pointing out towards a certain route (as is the case with street placards), they have both ends

[312] 2002: 6
[313] Friesen, 2013
[314] see Figure 3
[315] Crowley, 2013: 384

sharpened into triangular shapes. This might suggest that the commodities or services are present in every direction; and the excess of consumer goods or experience is demonstrated in the imagery of the poster that was piled up on top of the placard.

The stillness of these constituents – both placards and posters with a 'frozen girl' – is particularly augmented since they are placed alongside the outlines of passing figures which give the impression of being dynamic, in transit. That is so except for another silhouette completely in black that stands at the corner of a street, not facing the direction of the indicated flow of movement. Accordingly, 'Fromanger asserts the force of vitality above the entropy of consumerist equivalence: his paintings celebrate vibrancy and differentiation in and against this regime of standardization, reworking the contingencies of our suborned desire in such a way as to offer this desire the possibility of freeing itself from the circuit of consumption into which it is abusively channelled.'[316] One can claim that this artwork is almost hopeful – the crowd carries on in its progress, even though it is confronted with the stillness of commodity. This crowd does not appear to be standardized either due to the different lines and patterns that fill up subsequent silhouettes – additionally, there is one figure portrayed who does not even follow the route of this crowd. According to Martin Crowley, it connotes that Fromanger 'extracts an emancipatory truth (no need to bow down before a Platonism that subordinates what is to the authority of an absent model) from the misery of standardization (the serial production of consumer goods), exaggerating this seriality until it turns inside out, and affirms the lively differentiation that such standardization seeks to confine.'[317]

Subsequently, one can argue that both the posters with 'frozen girl' and Fromanger's painting originated from a photograph – while Fromanger painted over it, the creators of the poster added some textual elements to it. One can therefore inquire if the significance of authorship was equal to both of these works. It is therefore possible to pose a following question: how are these two works different then, if they are both realised from the model of a photograph? According to Benjamin, the genuineness of an artwork is contained within its aura. The aura is closely linked to the object's originality – but as soon as the original article is made reproducible, it loses this quality. On the other hand, the fact that art is so easily reproducible and thus accessible to mass response enables it to be politicised.[318] This trend is, according to Benjamin, an observable fact most explicit in the case of newspapers. He

[316] Ibid, 383
[317] Ibid, 382
[318] 1999: 240

believed that this medium marked the loss of experience. He described it in his essay 'The Storyteller,' (1936) in which he attributed the true value to the act of storytelling as it required genuine experience. However, he claimed that his 'craft of storytelling' is now dead, for it was replaced with the 'information' – in the form it can be found in the newspapers' articles – that is, short and easily consumable.[319]

Newspapers also contain many images – nowadays the majority of those are part of advertising – and these are likewise copied countless times, until the point of reference can no longer be detected. This process is explained by Baudrillard when he claimed that 'an affiliation to the model generates meaning and makes sense (fait sens). Nothing functions according to an end, but proceeds from the model, the 'signifier of reference,' which acts like an anterior finality, supplying the only credible outcome (la seule vraisemblance).'[320] There are many examples that could illustrate this claim – as one example, I can mention the case when 'it emerged that posters designed to advertise the delights of northern France and the Mediterranean actually show a beach in South Africa.'[321] The focus of this marketing campaign was not to depict an actual picture of northern France, but to develop the wished image of it and sell it to the masses; it did not matter that the original or genuine image was lost in the process.

One must then pose the following question – if Fromanger's paintings are full of relevant political material, why did he decide to choose the medium of newspaper photography – for as it has been already demonstrated, he did not believe in its objectivity? I believe that he attempted to employ the empty information and surpass it into the genuine form. Perhaps his strategy can be compared to that of Baudelaire's. As I have demonstrated it in Chapter One, Baudelaire was aware of his readers' anaesthetised responsiveness, and so he explicitly used an adjusted writing form in order to attract his audience; while he simultaneously attempted to convey the artistic quality of 'eternal essence' into his writing. Is it possible that Fromanger performed the same task – choosing the medium of newspapers precisely because it was so readily consumed by his audience? Crowley recorded that in '1987 talk Deleuze argues that, as 'counter-information', the artwork offers the possibility of encountering the differentiating forces of life, in and against the constraints imposed by the orthodox regime of 'information.''[322]

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[319] 1999: 88
[320] 1984: 64
[321] Newling, 2012
[322] 2013: 385

I would like to argue that this debate is relevant for the reason that Fromanger's art was very closely bonded with the medium of newspapers – he actually used some of their images as his model, such as in his 'La révolte de la prison de Toul N. 1.' (1972)[323] But this photography did not simply inform one about the outbreak of upheaval – it told a story too. Ironically, the choice of covering faces of each of the depicted character by the bloc of different colour in fact individualised these personas. Certainly, all the characters from this photography lack any facial features that could have characterised them according to their individual traits. Despite this, the different colours mark the disparity between each of them and the added squares of colours within the painting designate private space for every one of them. Thus, even though these characters are depicted as a group in union, they also have space allocated for their privacy. This painting thus operated as a conveyor of the characters' personal stories but also their shared struggle. Benjamin noted this juxtaposition when he claimed that 'the difference between the copy, which illustrated papers and newsreels keep in readiness, and the original picture is unmistakable. Uniqueness and duration are as intimately intertwined in the latter as are transience and reproducibility in the former.'[324] And Fromanger's images were certainly original – firstly, this claim can be supported by his methodology. Fromanger first chose a photograph, then projected it into a blank canvas and finally painted the lines and shapes in the realistic manner as soon as the blank space became illuminated with another image. According to Sarah Wilson, this process of creation generated 'distance from the ephemeral photograph and insist upon the artist's basic tasks as delineator, colourist, and as history painter.'[325] His painting technique was adapted to suit the current times – it is also crucial to point out that the traditional *Maestros* likewise chose to paint landscape portraits in their studios (until the Impressionists' revolution of painting *en plain air*); and Fromanger performed paintings of his streets in his own studio as well. Secondly, his artistic contribution towards the imagery of the painting was likewise crucial. He employed the medium of newspaper photography, but he transformed it with added elements and so 'the artist is indispensable in the shaping and analysis and understanding of the life of forms, and structures created by electric technology.'[326]

This enhanced element of uniqueness that formed the disparity between two images can be adapted to Barthes' term 'punctum' which was introduced in essay 'Camera Lucida.'

[323] see Figure 4
[324] Benjamin, 1999: 519
[325] 1999: 17
[326] McLuhan, 1994: 65

(1980) He called it the 'element which rises from the scene, shoots out of it like an arrow, and pierces me.'[327] One can argue that Fromanger overtly explicated these elements – as in the above-mentioned painting 'La Vie et la mort du people.' (1975) He directed audience's responsiveness towards the advertising; as I have discussed, he portrayed its emptiness in explicit terms. Needless to say, if the different extracts were not differentiated according to Fromanger's choice of colouring and the original photograph was presented instead, it is reasonable to assume that the audience would not focus on these posters for the amount of visual stimuli in the photograph of a busy street would be overwhelming. This interference is crucial, for 'the serious artist is the only person able to encounter technology with impunity, just because he is an expert aware of the changes in sense perception.'[328] In this matter, I would also like to establish Benjamin's thoughts – he described the difference between the hollow information and the meaningful story in the following terms:

> 'The storytelling does not aim to convey the pure essence of the thing, like information or a report. It sinks the thing into the life of the storyteller, in order to bring it out of him again. Thus traces of the storyteller cling to the story the way the handprints of the potter cling to the clay vessel.'[329]

Fromanger's paintings were hardly straightforward in the way they bring out information. Instead, they highlighted certain features, but they allowed the reader to find their own reading – that is to say, 'the psychological connection of the events is not forced on the reader. It is left up to him to interpret things the way he understands them, and thus the narrative achieves an amplitude that information lacks.'[330] While the newspapers' pictures informed, Fromanger's paintings told a story. Fromanger produced his images by colouring them, filling out their shapes with geographical prints and leaving others monochrome – and he left one with a seemingly directive map which was supposed to explain the image; the colours marching was supposed to be the key (as it is exemplified in 'La mort de Caius Gracchus' (1975)) – but yet the generation of comprehension from this map is somehow not in totalised terms. Thus, it is possible that he resuscitated the art of story-telling once again – while facing its biggest enemy in direct opposition.

Another reason Fromanger's paintings can be perceived as stories is their fluidity. Paintings within a particular series interact – they reference each other and hence form a

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[327] Barthes, 1981: 26
[328] McLuhan, 1994: 59
[329] 1999: 91
[330] Ibid, 89

particular continuity. As I have already discussed ‘La mort de Caius Gracchus’ (1975) and ‘La Vie et la mort du people’ (1975) – the way their stories intertwine due to the same characters they feature, I would also like to discuss two other paintings – ‘Rouge de Cadmium clair’ (1972)[331] and ‘Vert Véronèse.’ (1972)[332] Firstly, if one is to examine ‘Rouge de Cadmium clair,’ (1972) similar technique could be established to ‘La Vie et la mort du people’ (1975). To be exact, mannequins in the background likewise appear to be as if ‘frozen’ in time – the first impression is that they are ghosts floating against the red background. Perhaps this peculiar inkling is produced by the colour scheme – red background is very vibrant which generates state of alertness in the beholder’s eyes as red is not usually encountered in our natural surroundings and in excess it triggers an aggressive reaction. In comparison, the pale figurines do not appear lively – especially in their posture are they are depicted as rather unnatural. Another depicted figure is a passer-by who does not give any attention to the display; rather, he walks past by it while eating. He appears to be in transit, he is of green colour and his face is very sharp. One can recognise him to be alive – for he is moving and eating (and these actions are usually associated with life); and his facial features are visible. Likewise, green colour signifies life and nature. Thus his natural aspect is contrasted with the artificial display of mechanically produced goods; he is alive and fulfilling one of the genuine desires of the body rather than a fabricated desire for a commodity. There are two other figures depicted, both in black and distanced from the scenery around them – just like the one black figure who does not follow the direction of the crowd in ‘La Vie et la mort du people.’ (1975) While the woman’s outline has her back turned on the mannequins, the other figure is looking at them. Black paint gives the impression that this person is somehow external to the painting – hence, a spectator can possibly visualise this figure to be a silent shadow by his side, to be another judge to this artwork. (in effect, the figure’s posture assists this interpretation as well: his hands are crossed so he appears to be in the state of mediation)

If one is to look at another painting from the series – ‘Vert Véronèse’ (1972) – one perceives the same scenery once again. It was reproduced and placed behind a pane of glass. Outside, on a street, the black figure of the ‘silent spectator’ is visible once again in exactly the same posture – although he is mirrored. One can discern ‘Galerie’ written on the window glass – this title is ambiguous, for it can be translated as either a ‘gallery’ or an ‘arcade.’ Perhaps both translations were intended to be truthful – in the case Fromanger attempted to

[331] see Figure 5
[332] see Figure 6

indicate that the position of art market underneath the capitalist regime accounted to the same status as the shops selling any other kind of luxurious commodities achieved. Nonetheless, a viewer is left with two possible alternatives on how to decipher this puzzle: either the interior illustrates one shop of an arcade stocked up with mannequins, or Fromanger is in fact presenting his original painting 'Cadmium clair' (1972) hung on the gallery wall facing the window. If the latter is true, then the pane of glass can have the same connotations it held for Baudelaire's art. To be exact, it is possible that Fromanger referenced his art in this piece – while the role of glass is crucial. Its transparency can connote clarity, but likewise the gateway – his art can appear to be empty (while encompassing the scenery and the object of commodity in itself), but in fact it has an inner meaning, or essence; and its recognisable form acts as a certain passageway. This is hidden in an endless copy which is as a continuation in itself. In comparison to the above-discussed argument, the equivalent estimation of his art – incorporated into this painting – is that it can be perceived to be blank like newspaper photography, but in reality it has deeper meaning woven within itself. It is consistent with Crawley's words that 'Fromanger details the iconography of consumerism — including the place of the painter — in such a way as to turn its system inside out, extracting from it an affirmation of just that genuine, incessant, vital productivity it strives to reduce.'[333]

Fromanger focused on apprehending the street mass via above-mentioned paintings which addressed the same alliance of audience that it had turned into their very own subject matter. However, he also seized the attention by literally moving his art onto the streets. During the May 1968 revolution, he was one of the artists who created and distributed posters. As Min Hye noted, under his 'guidance, more than half of the 700 designs—with a total print run of around 300,000 posters–were produced in the Atelier Populaire.'[334] Thus, he reclaimed the public space; he replaced the posters propagating consumer goods with his revolutionary messages. These posters created in Atelier Populaire were not signed and created in union. They were conveying different slogans – for example, one of them featured young man stating 'Nous sommes tous des Juifs allemands' (1968)[335] therefore representing the group of oppressed. Benjamin predicted that art produced by mechanical reproduction can be used for 'the formulation of revolutionary demands in the politics of art.'[336] Karen Carter likewise mentioned that 'Frederick Engels advocated 'the right of workers to the literature provided

[333] 2013: 383
[334] 2015: 13
[335] See Figure 7
[336] 1999: 218

free of charge in the form of posters' and championed the poster as one of the most important methods for revolutionary struggle, since it was the 'chief means of influencing the proletariat.''[337]

Conversely, some of Fromanger's most eminent works were produced after the revolution, in an atmosphere of general disillusionment. These works, titled 'Souffles,'[338] (1968) had an identical purpose to that of the already analysed works: namely, it was to offer an alternative perspective to the monotone everyday street crowds by colouring it up. In other words, they 'provided a visual metaphor of arrested revolutionary aspirations. […] the Souffles' engagement with public space indicated a desire to transcend institutional and spatial constraints.'[339] It is also evident that Fromanger's use of medium was rather unorthodox, and deliberately so – since the 'use of Plexiglas was both a means to destabilize vision and to desacralize the traditional art object.'[340] Moreover, these works were collaboratively produced and installed with the aid of anonymous workers – and so Fromanger also disrupted the bourgeois myth of an artwork's value calculated according to the individual genius of an artist. Certainly, this 'non-conformism' is comparable with the artistic process that was employed in the already mentioned works for the reason that it was general perception that 'the photographic professionals have fallen back on the austerity of an 'art' whose internal rules forbid the crime of plagiarism.'[341] However, these traditional ideas were confronted by Marshall McLuhan who argued that 'when the technology of a time is powerfully thrusting in one direction, wisdom may well call for a countervailing thrust.'[342]

II.

The streets were likewise the scene of action for the art of Hains and Villeglé. However, paradoxically, it was not a site where they exhibited their works – it was a site from which they sourced their works, in literal terms. To be specific, they produced décollages – whose working mechanism is rather ironic in its ambiguity. It works on two levels: firstly, this technique of collecting art material disobeyed law according to which the process of tearing down a poster is classified as vandalism, that is, a destructive action. Certainly, in

[337] 2015: 360
[338] see Figure 8
[339] Siegelbaum, 2011: 10
[340] Ibid, 253
[341] Foucault, 1999: 88
[342] 1994: 70-71

doing this Hains and Villeglé damaged the display of private property which paid to be exhibited to the broad audience and its intended purpose was to educate this audience about the newest products. On the other hand, these artists did not destroy posters themselves – and albeit they removed posters from the audience they were designated for, the artists also preserved them for the eyes of a new audience. The posters were conserved and then dislocated from the streets and exhibited anew in the galleries. Villeglé called it the 'irruption of the street within the museum'[343] which I find ironic since museums were traditionally perceived within the private sphere. There are historical connotations that only the privileged had an access to articles of High Art – I have already discussed Benjamin's argument from 'The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction' (1936) in my previous chapters. Even though Benjamin concluded that in the modern times art was made accessible to the masses, it is essential to note that the level of exclusion is still noticeable even in the present times – for example, Ministère de la Culture ordered compulsory Sunday free admission entries for national museum in 2001 in order to contest the unequal representation of visitors belonging to different socio-economic or ethnic groups.[344] On the other hand, the streets are supposed to be sites of equal and unrestricted domains. But Hains and Villeglé demonstrated that this popular belief is not true since they pointed out at 'the colonization of the street by commodified language.'[345] It is an open critique of their current society and its capitalist model – they agreed with Debord that advertising is one of the specific manifestations through which 'le spectacle constitue le modèle présent de la vie socialement dominante.'[346] These two artists perceived the threat of governmental control in the posters they encountered on the streets – either they were propagating newest commercial products, or they publicized political parties or their candidates. Hannah Feldman observed these two artists generated resistance against 'the domination of the city's public space by political and commercial propaganda.'[347] Many streets were exploited as sites designated to the propagation of governmental indoctrination – as Margaret Weitz noted, 'exceptional number of propaganda posters produced (for example, over three million to mark Labor Day, May 1, 1941) during a period of acute shortages - especially paper - testifies to the importance accorded them.'[348] Likewise, Villeglé was in agreement when he commented that 'poster paper was better quality

[343] Cabañas, 2007: 84
[344] Eidelman, 2012: 144
[345] Cabañas, 2007: 74
[346] 1992: 11
[347] Feldman, 2004: 77
[348] Weitz, 2000: 43

than book paper, because posters were such an important channel for information, dissemination, propaganda.'[349] But with their acts of vandalism, Hains and Villeglé reclaimed the streets as the realms of public space once again.

Another element that formulated their art as 'public' is the fact that they employed the method of collective authorship. They titled their contributors as 'Lacéré Anonyme'[350] and called themselves performers of 'non-action painting.'[351] Artists' private involvement in the methodology of art creation was rather passive: they only looked for posters which were already 'worked on' by others. These others are the anonymous members of public who had torn specific parts of the posters. After Hains and Villeglé found such posters, they simply dismantled them from the walls and glued them on canvas – without any direct authorial interference. In doing so, they destroyed one constituent of the Western traditions of visual art: they – as the celebrated artists – did not show any excellent skills or properties of genius. The material they used was also iconoclastic – not only because it was created by someone else (namely, by marketing executives and anonymous lacerators), but also because it was dedicated to the 'popular culture' of 'easy consumption' and therefore automatically disqualified from the criteria of High Art. Needless to say, this approach is identical in the collages of the Cubists, for which they used common materials such as newspapers or even oil cloth (as I have already mentioned in my previous chapter) – and Villeglé confirmed this stance when he claimed that for him, the purpose of the collage was to 'transform into pictorial expression any element of our daily universe.'[352]

Conflict is thus created for traditionally there was a very clear distinction between everyday articles and objects of art. Just as the name implies, everyday articles are supposed to be used on a daily basis and then be disposed with; while the object of art embraces a certain eternal quality – which is conventionally attributed to art objects on account of their outstanding beauty. Consequently, posters are the products with predictable expiration date – their cessation occurred either due to expected weather damage, or by wearing out their novelty. To be specific, advertisements are supposed to promote the most recent products, but sooner or later this exclusivity subsides and the advertisers then pay for an old poster's place on the wall so they could cover it up with a poster showing even newer products. However, as

[349] François Bon, 2007: 175
[350] Cabañas, 2007: 72
[351] Le Grand, 2008
[352] Cabañas, 2007: 76

a result of Hains' and Villeglé's interference, these posters were transformed into art objects. Externally, they remained unchanged, but their status and function were altered.

On the other hand, it is crucial to note that the traditional model of art marked changed in modern times as well. It encompassed the same trend that was perceptible in advertising – namely, it was the newest style that got most of the attention. Nachoem Wijnberg and Gerda Gemser likewise noted 'an important change in the selection system dominating the visual arts industry'[353] that they characterised as 'an increase in the value of innovation.'[354] They emphasised that 'because innovativeness came to serve as the dominant criterion for the evaluation of quality in the painting industry, only the work of the innovators has remained valuable, while much of the work of contemporaneous academic painters has disappeared or is only valued as a curiosity, not as a work of art.'[355] Modern art then became an archive of the most progressive styles of the influential artists' time – and, essentially, décollages served to the same objective: they created an archive of memories of their times, of the novel products and most promising politicians whose conservation assigned them with everlasting novelty.

The impact of Hains' and Villeglé's art is even emphasized in recent times, as in the last few years the art market opened up to the sales of common everyday posters – more and more people collect these for they are beautiful, historically enrooted, and yet considerably more affordable than objects of fine art. Albeit, this might not be such a recent invention after all – Sarah Pope noted that, 'during the end of the nineteenth century, a battle between industry and tradition emerged. Prints and posters were examples of the fleeting nature of modernity, and […] many began to supplement their collections with lithographs at a rate that caused anxiety among the traditionalists.'[356] On the other hand, it is important to mention that Hains' and Villeglé's work do not fall into this category completely for the fact that 'the transient nature of the poster, highly subject to elements such as weather, vandalism and theft, generated an urge to collect and for those collectors to seek out works that were pristine and untouched'[357] – and Hains with Villeglé purposely looked for the posters with visible damages for it also preserved the memory of human touch and perception.

[353] 2000: 326
[354] Ibid, 324
[355] Ibid, 327
[356] 2009: 3
[357] Ibid: 13

In conclusion, Fromanger's, Hains', and Villeglé's artwork all used 'unworthy materials,' anonymous co-creators and 'unoriginal' reproducible models from the advertising, photographs or paintings. However, I would like to propose that they are nonetheless connected to the tradition, although they 'modified' their expression into their own times – just like, as I have shown in Chapter Two, de Chirico did. Fromanger's art might have been created upon a routine of copying, but it did not act like a copy – rather, it acted like an original image mediating the relevance – in the form of story – and 'passing it on.' Some of his paintings work in dialectical terms when they facilitate the passage of the past into the present moment. Others operate due to process of inserting an ethereal quality into plastic images. Their form is contemporary – that of ever-present advertisers – for they endeavoured to attract the contemporary audience. The aim of Fromanger's paintings was to portray explicitly the consumption of either commodities or non-referential images to the audience – and to make people aware of it. Furthermore, once these paintings familiarised people with their current experience, they also attempted to endow the audience with an alternative to their experience – and it was perhaps most notable when the 'tool' portraying the alternative form of experience was placed directly in the streets in the form of 'Souffles.' (1968) Conversely Hains and Villeglé employed an opaque strategy: they removed 'art' (or what they transformed into art) from the streets in order to demonstrate it in gallery. They decided to alarm the public in this way with the change of the posters' 'natural environment' enhancing the connotations of the everyday. Finally, I would like to assert that the practice of the artists I have described in this chapter was comparable to that of the artists from the SI whom I have mentioned in the previous chapter. While artists from the SI used deliberately bad paintings in order to flood what they perceived to be the bad art market; Fromanger, Hains and Villeglé all used what they believed were good images in order to emphasize and exemplify the overflow of bad images, accessible everywhere.

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Figure 1

Gérard Fromanger, 'La mort de Caius Gracchus.' (1975) Web.

Figure 2

François Topino-Lebrun, 'The Death of Gaius Gracchus.' (1792) Web.

Figure 3

Gérard Fromanger, 'La Vie et la mort du people.' (1975) Web.

Figure 4

Gérard Fromanger, 'La révolte de la prison de Toul N. 1.' (1972) Web.

Figure 5

Gérard Fromanger, ‘Rouge de Cadmium clair.’ (1972) Web.

Figure 6

Gérard Fromanger, ‘Vert Véronèse.’ (1972) Web.

Figure 7

Gérard Fromanger, 'Nous sommes tous des Juifs allemands.' (1968) Web.

Figure 8

Gérard Fromanger, 'Souffles.' (1968) Web.

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Conclusion

In conclusion, my research focused on the practice of several modern artists. I analysed their writings and visual artworks. I studied their technique, form, medium, subject matter and their own supporting statements on account of their art and the selection and implementation of all the mentioned elements within their artworks. In addition, I studied economic and socio-historical changes in their contemporary society. I also examined objects of technological developments of the artists' times and the varying scope of influences these inventions had over the course of everyday life. I have attempted to locate and clarify the impact of these changes in the environment on the artists' choice of self-expression via their artworks. In other words, my aim was to locate any parallels in the transformation of the everyday life with the transformation of the practice of modern artists while also examining if their artworks contained any traces of tradition.

The foundation for my argument was the theory of Walter Benjamin. I discussed his writings on modernity and used them for my analysis of selected modern artists. Primarily, I concentrated on his claim that modernity is manifested in the process of a loss of tradition. I believe that my Thesis has proven that modernity does not necessarily connote the loss of tradition – as I was able to trace traditional elements in the works I analysed. After I analysed case studies of some prominent modern artists I discovered that their art was connected to the tradition, although this connection was not always straightforward. It seems that tradition in their art was modified in order to be more adequate for the artists' current times and it was composed so as to be more relatable for their audience. Even though the term 'innovative tradition' is an oxymoron, I believe that in the context of my research it describes my findings in the most accurate terms.

Firstly, I examined Charles Baudelaire's poetry and the social situation in Paris of his times. I have noted down a few instances in which tradition seemed to gradually disappear – after the recession of initial social resistance (such as names of houses and of children). But the Parisians of the late nineteenth century were not only conceptually estranged from their immediate surroundings – they also experienced a distancing of their environment in physical terms after Haussmann's extensive reconstruction of Paris. It is plausible that these alienations – together with a newly obtained desire for the consumption of luxurious articles (that was aided by Haussmann's architecture, but founded upon the new model of modern labor relations and economy) – explained the loss of a certain emotional depth that was required of

the reader of lyrical poetry – and that is why Parisians chose to read feuilletons instead. However, Baudelaire succeeded in reacting to these social changes affecting the literary market by adjusting the form and subject matter of his writing. Even though he 'disguised' his poetry in such ways, he remained devoted to the depiction of the traditional ideal of the sublime and eternal quality in his poetry.

In my Second Chapter, I discussed two different responses to the experience of modern everyday life from the Futurists and Giorgio de Chirico who were living and working approximately in the same time and place. I investigated the validity of their writings in which they defended the particular subject matters and techniques they chose. Futurists themselves admitted that the clear and definite break from tradition was unachievable; but they attempted to distance themselves from the traditional practice nonetheless. De Chirico suggested that these attempts emerged only on account of their own incompetence in the practice of painting. I compared the arguments of the Futurists to those of de Chirico and, surprisingly, I was able to discover equivalencies in their accounts of modern life of their times. It demonstrated that their current times had a major impact on the perspective of the world on both parties who correspondingly perceived it to be brutalist. While the Futurists embraced this feature of the novel society, de Chirico advocated for a return to the traditional establishment. However, this experience of the modernity affected his art practice as well – to be precise, he introduced new subject matter in his paintings. Though his integration of modern elements was similar to Baudelaire's – he created a connection between his paintings and his current era, but likewise strived for the presence of the traditional ideal of the sublime and eternal quality in his paintings.

In my Third Chapter, I studied the Situationist International and post war Paris. In Paris, this historical era was in certain regards comparable to the end of the nineteenth century. It was epitomised by the growth of the economy (that resulted in a surge of public spending), modern labor relationships, and by the widespread reconstruction of Paris. Like Baudelaire, members of the Situationist International felt alienated from the newly built city and they expressed aversion towards the consumerist-focused organisation of their society. They believed that these two factors prevented them from achieving the genuine experience of self-fulfilment via the arts for they were unable to achieve the feeling of belonging (that is in a direct relation with the tradition – for example, see the discussion on the name of houses and children in Chapter One). Their response was a radical one – they refused to create any more art. The only artworks they did create were deliberately 'bad,' anti-artworks. The Situationist

International therefore confirmed that it is not feasible to create modern art without any connection to tradition.

The artists from my final chapter also reflected critically on the consumerist style of life. Gérard Fromanger depicted his frustration with this society's inclination in his painting 'Vert Véronèse' (1972) when he ambiguously indicated that his painting is part of a 'shopping arcade' and Jacques Villeglé with Raymond Hains presented the gallery goers with a stark contrast of the 'torn reality' of visual smog that was so typical for their times. All three artists explored urban reality as the subject matter of their work. While Baudelaire experienced a feeling of disorientation because new buildings suddenly arose at peculiar spots and the old streets disappeared from the landscape on a daily basis; the trio of artists from the 1960s underwent an equally shocking reaction, yet in different form – they could not even recognise the buildings of their surroundings due to excessive coatings of advertising and visual smog.

Hains' and Villeglé's reaction was to transform the endless copies of posters into original artworks with inherited inner value. Like all the aforementioned artists, Hains and Villeglé connected their art with their current times – they did so in a straightforward and physical manner, via the medium of posters. However, Villeglé's cataloguing integrated these posters into France's history – he captured different societal moods and fashions, as depicted in the posters themselves and in the detrimental actions of passers-by, who tore the posters. This peculiar poster database then acted as an entity encompassing tradition – for its purpose was to transmit an account of French memory on to the following generations. Fromanger's art was likewise related to the modernity of his times while, at the same time, it included tradition. This reflected in his technique – he used the technology of photography and projection in order to create his art, but he nonetheless performed the role of a traditional artist when he meticulously painted the images onto his canvases. Similarly, his subject matter was modern and often sourced from the newspapers (which, in Fromanger's times, were of the same status that the feuilletons were in Baudelaire's times) but he endowed it with a story – and thus he also implemented eternal quality into his artworks.

In these chapters I have demonstrated that modern art was not detached from tradition completely. I believe that my research is valuable for 'modern art' is generally considered to represent a fundamental break with 'traditional art.' Instead, I argued, the ultimate break with tradition in modern art is unfeasible. Even if at first it seems that the modern artwork's technique, form, medium, or subject matter does not correspond to that of a traditional artwork – the connection to tradition is nonetheless present in modern art, it is only less explicit and perhaps more difficult to locate.

I am aware that the length of my Thesis did not allow me to present concise and complete study of modern artists' practices. Instead, due to limitations in my Thesis' word count and the vast scope of modern artists and art movements of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, I illustrated a few case studies of the works of prominent modern artists in specific eras that I regarded as central examples of societal modern development. I believe that my research introduced some clarity into the divergence in terms of modernity and tradition; I also believe that it portrayed some extent of correlation in the process of adaptation of artists' practices to their current environment. It also posed further questions – particularly on the study of further deviations from the model of traditional art in contemporary art practice. I have discussed contemporary art in my Introduction and the general feeling of the audience that they are unable to relate to the artworks. Therefore, on one hand, I believe that my research elucidates, up to a certain extent, the development of modern art and its connection to traditional art; but, on the other hand, it suggests questions for further research that might well be conducted on the exploration of a link between modern and contemporary art; or on the exploration of tradition within contemporary art.

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